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THE LIFE
OF
SŒUR ROSALIE,

105
Of the Daughters of St. Vincent de Paul.

BORN SEPTEMBER 8, 1787; DIED FEBRUARY 7, 1856.



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PREFACE.

It is a wonderful thing to see the hold which St. Vincent of Paul has still upon the city of Paris. After the lapse of two centuries, and across the chasm left by a revolution which swallowed up all that was sacred and holy as well as all that was kingly and noble in France, the calm loving eye of the humble devoted priest seems still to watch over the fierce and fitful struggles of the nation he loved so well, and to welcome with a father's tenderness its return to faith and love. His image meets us at every turn.

The royal house of France has crumbled to the dust; the Bourbons have gone their way, and their place knows them no more; a new dynasty has arisen to fill its ancient throne; but the sons and daughters of the peasant's son who witnessed for Christ amid the splendours of a court still bear their father's

name to the ends of the earth, and at this very hour are winning their crowns of martyrdom in China, or earning the reward of confessors in the faubourgs of Paris. *Generatio rectorum benedicetur.*

St. Vincent was eminently the saint of practical and daily life; and his daughters bear his image so plainly stamped upon them, that even this practical age acknowledges their utility, and tolerates their devotion to God in consideration of their services to man. The Sœur Rosalie, besides this general resemblance which she shared with her most obscure and commonplace sisters, had inherited much of the talent for government, and all the burning love for souls, which fitted him to be the leader of the Lord's battle against the evil spirits of his time. And so, in her narrow sphere, she has left a memory behind her like to his. Her name is a household word among all ranks in Paris. Her sisters cannot speak it without tears; and even strangers, as they kneel on that spot in the little chapel of the Rue l'Epée-de-Bois which was formerly her cell, feel their faith and courage rise to meet the trials and difficulties amid which one in their own time, and in circumstances like theirs, was ripened for heaven.

One of the most interesting charities in Paris is the Orphan Asylum of the Menilmontant, founded

by the Sœur Rosalie for the children of those who died in the cholera. The sister who has the care of this institution was with her for many years, and was present at the rescue of the officer of the Garde Mobile, when the muskets of the revolutionary mob rested upon the shoulders of the sisters. A single question about her beloved mother suffices to draw forth a torrent of affectionate remembrances, and she points out with pride among her children the last little boy who was received by the Sœur Rosalie.

At the Rue l'Epée-de-Bois, her home for nearly fifty years, the visitor, if he shows a real interest in the subject (for who would speak of a mother to indifferent ears?), may hear many a touching detail of her care for her children; and as he looks upon her portrait in the little parlour so often brightened by her living presence, may remark the singular mixture of intelligence, firmness, and sweetness there depicted in a very ordinary painting. If he asks for her cell, he will be told that it now forms a part of the chapel; and thither let him go, and pray for a portion of that spirit which rested upon the *Mother of the Poor*.

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THE
LIFE OF THE SŒUR ROSALIE.

CHAPTER I.

CHILDHOOD AND YOUTH OF THE SŒUR ROSALIE.

"THE saints of God," says one of our greatest living writers, "may be divided in their external aspect into two classes.*"

"There are those, on the one hand, who are so absorbed in the divine life, that they seem, even while they are in the flesh, to have no part in earth or in human nature, but to think, speak, and act under views, affections, and motives simply supernatural. If they love others, it is simply because they love God, and because man is the subject either of His compassion or of His praise. If they rejoice, it is in what is unseen; if they feel interest, it is in what is unearthly; if they speak, it is almost with the voice of angels; if they eat or drink, it is almost of angels' food alone; for it is recorded in their histories, that for weeks they have fed on nothing but that heavenly bread which is the proper nourishment of the soul.

"On the other hand, there are those, and of the

* Father Newman: Sermon on the character of St. Paul.

highest order of sanctity too, as far as our eyes can see, in whom the supernatural combines with nature instead of superseding it,—invigorating, elevating, ennobling it; and who are not the less men because they are saints. They do not put away their natural endowments, but use them to the glory of the Giver; they do not act beside them, but through them; they do not eclipse them by the brightness of divine grace, but only transfigure them. They are busy in human society; they understand the human heart; they can throw themselves into the minds of other men. While they themselves stand secure in the blessedness of purity and peace, they can follow in imagination the ten thousand aberrations of pride, passion, and remorse. The world is to them a book, to which they are drawn for its own sake, which they read fluently, which interests them naturally; though, by reason of the grace which dwells within them, they study it and hold converse with it only for the glory of God and the salvation of souls. Thus they have the thoughts, feelings, frames of mind, attractions, sympathies, antipathies of other men so far as these are not sinful; only they have these properties of human nature purified, sanctified, and exalted.”

They are not unclothed, but clothed upon. Their human nature, human affections, human gifts, are possessed and glorified by a new and heavenly life. They are not stripped of nature, but clothed with grace and the power of Christ. Human nature, the common nature of the whole race of Adam, acts in them with a sort of bodily fullness, always under the sovereign command of divine grace, but losing none of its real freedom and power by such subordination. And because they have the nature of man so strong within them, they are able to enter into human nature and to sympathise with it with a tact peculiarly

their own, and by the strong attraction of this sympathy to draw other hearts to theirs, till in their measure they become like to Him who draws all men to Himself by the attraction of His own Divine Humanity lifted up from the earth. This is the secret of the mighty mastery exercised over the souls of men by the great Apostle of the Gentiles, by which he bowed the heart of the old pagan world to the obedience of Christ; and it was by no other attraction than this magnetism of love that the humble daughter of St. Vincent de Paul, whose life we are about to sketch, swayed the worse than pagan natures among whom for the love of Christ and for the love of them she laboured for fifty years.

She *sympathised* with them. The aged religious, whose life of half a century had been hidden with Christ in God; the young mountain girl, whose pure fresh heart had almost died within her at the first breath of the sorrow and sin-laden air of Paris,—sympathised with the red republican, the hard scoffing infidel, the reckless spendthrift, the hopeless drunkard; and by that sympathy she won them to Christ.

It was a great natural gift supernaturalised by grace; and it was apparent even in her earliest years, as the following pages, chiefly gathered from the narrative of one who knew and loved her,* will testify.

Jeanne Marie Rendu, known to the Catholic world by the name of La Sœur Rosalie, was born at Comfort, a hamlet dependent on the town of Lanscrans, in the Pays de Gex, on the 8th September, the Nativity of Our Blessed Lady, 1787. Her parents belonged to that ancient class of *bourgeoisie*, which answers in some degree to the yeomanry of this country in simpler times; a class more favourably situated perhaps than any other for the formation

* The Vicomte de Mehun.

of a strong and at the same time loving character, being raised above the hardening influences of extreme poverty, and yet sheltered from the dangers of luxury and false civilisation. She was a child of the mountains too, and nurtured in the simple habits of that country, where the children of the wealthiest proprietors might be seen, as in patriarchal times, watering the flocks or watching them on the lonely heights. Who shall say what heavenly visitants may there have made their presence felt by the solitary child?

• Nothing marvellous, however, is recorded of the childhood of Jeanne. She was impetuous, lively, volatile, as she says of herself, to excess; the first in all sports, and too often in all mischief. But the one master-passion, if we may so call it, of her life, —her love of the poor,—was early manifested. Her boisterous mirth was always hushed in their presence, and she would leave her merriest game in a moment to serve them.

Jeanne was trained in habits of devotion by a very pious mother, who was early left a widow, and who was distinguished even among the devout inhabitants of her native village as the very model of a Christian mother and mistress of a household. And this was no slight distinction amid that simple and fervent people.

Gex was at the time of which we speak one of the few green spots still visible among the blackened ruins of the Revolution. The spirit of their blessed apostle St. Francis of Sales still seemed to dwell among these valleys, and to keep them green and bright amid the storm which blasted all around.

The witness which Brittany and La Vendée bore for God in the west of France was borne by Gex in the south; and Jeanne loved to call herself the countrywoman of St. Francis.

She had hardly reached the age of seven years when the revolutionary persecution arose against the ministers of God; and her mother's known piety and loyalty led the Bishop of Annecy to seek shelter under her roof in the disguise of a servant. The Sœur Rosalie used often to relate with a shudder how nearly her childish wilfulness had been the destruction of the holy prelate. Being remarkably quick of perception, and not a little curious, the child soon remarked that Pierre (as he was called) was not treated like an ordinary servant. When no strangers were present he occupied the seat of honour, and received all the attention usually paid to the most respected guests. At last she discovered the secret. When she was supposed one night to be asleep, she saw through a curtain left partially open the supposed Pierre, vested as a priest, offering the holy Sacrifice of the Mass, while the family knelt around in humble devotion. A few days afterwards, on receiving some slight reprimand from her mother, and piqued at a secret having been kept from her, the little Jeanne answered pettishly, "Take care; I shall tell that Pierre is not Pierre."

Her mother was obliged to warn her of the fearful consequences to their good Bishop of any indiscretion on her part; and so was her young heart first darkened by the knowledge of the crimes and miseries of her country. Not many days afterwards her cousin, the Mayor of Annecy, was shot in the market-place for refusing to give up to desecration the relics of St. Francis of Sales.

The faithful of Lanscrans, the parish to which Comfort belonged, though deprived of all external worship, retained the blessing of a courageous and apostolical pastor. Like many priests in Brittany and Normandy, he celebrated the sacred offices in solitary woods and lonely caves. He went in dis-

guise to visit his scattered sheep, and carry to them, at the peril of his life, the sacraments and the word of life. He undertook to teach Jeanne her catechism. She received her first communion in a cavern from the hands of this proscribed priest. No sign of rejoicing, no religious ceremonial marked the day. The worshipers scarcely dared to light a taper or murmur a prayer; but the priest who ministered at that rude altar was preparing for martyrdom, and the maiden who then for the first time received her God vowed to devote her whole life to Him in the person of His little ones and His poor. The mystery, the dangers, and the virtues of the Catacombs were all there.

When the reign of terror fell at last before the justice of God and man, Jeanne was sent to finish her education in an Ursuline convent at Gex. Time and the stern trials she had passed through had matured her reason and tempered the impetuosity of her character. She was so pious, so recollected, so fervent in prayer, so detached from all that usually dazzles and fascinates the young, that the religious looked upon her rather as a novice than a pensioner, and counted on her profession. But she was not called to the cloister. Ever since she had attained the age of reason Jeanne had resolved to devote herself to God; but though she loved the Ursulines, admired their piety, and joined with delight in their prayer, when she left the chapel she longed for the hospital; the vocation of a Sister of Charity was unconsciously forming within her. A visit paid with her mother to the superioress of the hospital of Gex strengthened her desire, which she communicated to no one but to M. de Varicourt, the curé of Gex, and afterwards Bishop of Orleans, who encouraged and helped to develop it; so that when by his advice she went to a *pensionnat* founded by some pious ecclesi-

astics at Carouge, Jeanne had already devoted herself entirely to God and the poor.

She there continued her holy exercises and her life of regular observance, became, as before, the favourite of her mistresses and the example of her companions; but she still looked wistfully to the hospital of Gex. She obtained her mother's leave to spend some time there, and to assist the superior in her charitable work. There she made acquaintance with the sufferings for which she felt so strong an attraction, and began her apprenticeship of devotion.

It was about this time that the daughters of St. Vincent de Paul were reestablished in France by the First Consul. A bold deed, it was thought, even of "the conqueror of Europe, to stretch forth his hand between Marengo and Austerlitz to the Sisters of Charity."*

Jeanne hesitated not any longer; she opened her heart to a friend, Mdlle. Jacquinot, about fifteen years older than herself, who had devoted herself to the same work, and was about to set forth for the novitiate at Paris. She told her of her desires, her hopes, her long-continued prayers that God would receive her into His service; and besought her to take her with her. Mdlle. Jacquinot represented her youth and inexperience, and begged her to delay her purpose, and to take longer time for reflection; objecting also the resistance of her mother, who, she said, would never consent to part with her.

Jeanne went at once to her mother, told her of the vocation which she had so long nourished in secret, and of which God was now giving a token of His approbation by the opportunity thus offered of following it; and on her knees besought her consent and her blessing. Madame Rendu opposed the plan.

* F. Lacordaire.

by every argument which the prudence of maternal love could suggest. She doubted the solidity of a vocation which seemed to her hasty and ill-considered, and would have fain tested it by longer trial before giving up her child for ever. But as Jeanne insisted earnestly that her happiness and salvation were at stake, Madame Rendu ended by consenting to her departure, in the persuasion that time and change, and the very variety and distraction of the journey, would destroy the illusion and bring back her child. She gave her a letter to an ecclesiastic of great merit and virtue, who would soon, she said, cure her of her folly; and the two friends departed together.

The parting was heart-rending. The poor mother could hardly tear herself away from her child; and after she was seated in the diligence cried out to her, "Turn to me, my dearest child, that I may see you once more."

She could not turn her eyes away from the carriage which carried away her darling child. Nor did Jeanne suffer less. She was fully purposed to do the will of God; but she wept bitterly at leaving her mother. She never lost this acute sensibility to the anguish of parting with those she loved. Her unbounded charity never filled up the place of any of her affections; it only increased her capacity of loving, and with it of suffering, in those she loved. It seemed as if this mother and child, in the anguish of their separation, must have had a foretaste of their future lot. They met but once again during the long course of years they were destined to spend on earth, and then parted to meet no more till the day when they entered together into that land where there is neither absence nor farewell.

The two young girls arrived at Paris on the 25th of May of the year 1802, and went at once to the

Novitiate of the Sisters of Charity in the Rue du Vieux Colombier.

CHAPTER II.

THE SISTERS OF ST. VINCENT.

ST. VINCENT DE PAUL formed his community of Sisters of Charity of simple souls, loving good, fearing evil, and feeling within themselves a call to devote themselves to God and the poor. In their families they would have been good Christian women, distinguished from others only by a larger measure of benevolence, self-denial, and piety. He imposed upon them no prolonged devotions, no extraordinary austerities, and left them in daily contact with the world, from which they are severed only by the slight barrier of a yearly engagement. But in the midst of that world they live in the daily presence of God. The Sister of Charity receives Him at the altar, finds Him daily in the crib of the new-born babe, in the sick-chamber, on the bed of death. It is God Himself whom she tends and visits and serves in the persons of His poor.

The other charitable orders founded in the seventeenth century thought it impossible to preserve their fervour without the protection of a grille; but St. Vincent cast his daughters fearlessly into the world for which they were to labour. He gave them, as he said himself, "the hospital for their convent, the poor cabin for their cell, the crowded street for their cloister, the fear of God for their grate, and holy modesty for their veil." And God has set the seal upon his work. At the end of two hundred years his community is more flourishing than ever. Novices flow into it from every side; its action extends

to the remotest ends of the earth. Wherever the Sister of Charity is seen, the orphan calls her mother, the poor man sister, the soldier cries to her as he falls on the battle-field, the old man looks wistfully for her from his sick-bed to teach him how to die. To the daughters of St. Vincent are intrusted the schools, the hospitals, the orphanages, all the charitable institutions, in fact, of France: from her they are borrowed by other Catholic nations, while Protestants envy and seek in vain to imitate them. It was to this order, thus wide in its range and free in its mode of action, that the large heart and warm sympathies of the Sœur Rosalie were irresistibly attracted.

During the reign of terror the Sisters of Charity had been driven from their home; the doors of their schools and hospitals had been closed against them; they were forbidden to teach the people their duties, or to speak of God to the dying. But no decree of the Convention could efface the law of charity from their hearts. They were shut out of the hospitals as religious, but they found their way in as nurses. They were forbidden to receive the poor into their houses, they sought them in their own; and the sick man knew by the gentle touch and the pitying voice, and by some few holy words of which he had almost lost the meaning, that the heart of a Sister of Charity was concealed under the secular dress of a good neighbour.

When the tempest was past, and the religious habit was no longer proscribed, the sisters hastened to resume their community life. It was a blessed day for themselves and for their unhappy country when the daughters of St. Vincent knelt together once more, after so long and sorrowful a separation, before a common altar. Each had some offering to lay there, some deed of heroic charity, some soul

rescued from perdition, some life saved at the peril of her own. Each had fearful tales to tell her companions of her passage through that night of terror ; but no regret for the past mingled with the joy of this reunion. The Sisters of Charity had lost nothing in the Revolution. When they regained the liberty to visit the poor, to tend the sick, to instruct the little ones of Christ, they had nothing else to desire ; they had regained their country, their family, their wealth. The mother-house resumed its discipline and its labours, and joyfully opened its door to the two young girls who had come from the farthest boundary of France to enter upon their apprenticeship of charity.

And now came the bitterness of that trial which presses so heavily upon hearts like that of Jeanne. We look upon the calm brow and the bright smile, which impress even the most careless looker-on with an idea that, strange as it may seem, that nun or that Sister of Charity must be happy, and we dream not of all that has been gone through before that haven of peace was reached. In many instances, indeed, the abounding grace of God, and the joy of an assured vocation, carry the young novice through the anguish of her trial, even as some of the martyrs have been preserved unconscious of pain on the rack or at the stake. In other cases, the fiery trial has been anticipated, the struggle with sin or sorrow in the world has ceased at the threshold of the convent ; friends and kindred have been given up, or have been removed by death or estrangement, long before, and the broken heart comes into religion to be healed and soothed. There is no fresh sacrifice to be made, except that offering of the will to the yoke of holy obedience which completes the holocaust, and brings with it perfect peace.

But these are exceptional cases ; and the *Sœur Rosalie*, full as she was of human affections, and

endowed with extreme sensibility both physical and moral, had to drain the bitterness of this cup to the dregs. The home affections have ever been most intense in those who have sacrificed them most generously for the love of Jesus, as we see in the lives of St. Bernard, St. Jane Frances, St. Elizabeth &c.; and, as we may judge from the gift of sympathy so largely bestowed upon the Sœur Rosalie, they were especially intense in her.

What must have been the pang which woke with her every morning when she missed the fond mother's kiss, which is never fully prized till it is lost for ever! And associated with that yearning longing would come the memory of the indescribable sounds and sights of country life, the thought of which fills the eyes with tears as it brings before them the home of childhood, and the voices, and the faces, and the loving words, and even the happy silence in a father's or a mother's presence, never again to be enjoyed on earth.

And, added to all these trials of the affections, her very physical constitution made the life of a Sister of Charity peculiarly trying to her. She had all those feminine weaknesses which, with a lower grace and a feebler will, would have made her a nervous helpless woman. She felt the slightest change of atmosphere, she was afraid of a spider, she could not sleep near a churchyard, she shuddered at the idea of approaching a dead body.

She had a struggle with herself over every duty she performed. She gained the victory; but it was at the price of a severe and dangerous fit of illness. Her superiors, in order to restore her strength, removed her from the novitiate to another house of the order in the Rue des Francs-Bourgeois-Saint-Marcel.

The sisters of this house had never been dispersed; stationed as they were in the worst and most miser-

able part of Paris their faith had been forgiven in consideration of their charity. No one was found to denounce them, no one could have arrested them but at the bedside of the sick or the dying. The authorities were fain to shut their eyes to their existence. The Sœur Rosalie could have found no better school. She was now about sixteen, and endowed with every grace both of mind and person. The interior beauty of her soul was impressed upon her countenance. Her mind was remarkable for its simple ignorance of evil and its marvellous intelligence of good, for the mingled firmness and sensibility, energy and delicacy of a character in which the most ardent enthusiasm, tempered by the severest reason, was devoted to the service of charity.

Jeanne soon became the darling of the little community. The elder religious were under a kind of spell, unperceived either by her or themselves; so that the young novice did what she pleased with them all. At the end of her novitiate no one could bear to part with her; and when Jeanne went to the mother-house to make her vows, the superioress wrote to the mother-general, "I am much pleased with this little Rendu: give her the habit, and send her back to me."

Jeanne made her profession, received the name of the Sœur Rosalie, and then returned to the Faubourg St. Marceau never to quit it more. It was a spot worthy of her genius and her zeal.

CHAPTER III.

THE FAUBOURG ST. MARCEAU.

NOTWITHSTANDING all the improvements made during the course of the nineteenth century in the

city of Paris, the Faubourg St. Marceau is at this present time the most perfect type of suffering, the very home of misery. There poverty is poorer, unhealthiness more unhealthy, sickness more fatal, than elsewhere.

In 1802, immediately after the Revolution, the Faubourg St. Marceau was something more fearful still. It had acquired a dreadful celebrity in the frenzy of the Revolution, and was now fallen into that state of helpless languor which succeeds such a wild intoxication.

It was hard to bring its inhabitants back to the duties of quiet subjects, when the ephemeral sovereignty which they had exercised to their own destruction and that of their fellow-subjects had been wrested from their hands. In its narrow crooked streets, dilapidated houses, and low cellars, scarcely fit to shelter horses or pigs, whole families vegetated together on straw or earth, without air, without light, without fire, without bread.

Their moral and intellectual life was on a par with their physical existence. At the end of that godless period, in which worship had been abolished and instruction neglected, it was hard to find a child who could read, or a woman who remembered her prayers. The soul thus deprived of truth had withered away like the body. The way had to be opened anew to the church and the school, as well as to the workshop.

It was a hard task to make head against such a flood of physical and moral evil. But the Sœur Rosalie shrank not from it. She felt a solemn joy at the sight of this world to be conquered and regenerated, and thanked God for having granted her thus early the object of her fervent prayers. First as a simple sister of the house in the Rue des Francs-Bourgeois, a few years later as superioress of the

house in the Rue de l'Epée-de-Bois, but always the soul of her community, she waged unremitting war against the misery and the vice of her neighbourhood; she pursued this warfare for more than fifty years without one moment's respite, without one retrograde movement. Never discouraged, never defeated, she rested from one labour only by undertaking another; and never forsook her post or laid down her arms until, satisfied with her long conflict, and the victory she had won, her Lord called her to His eternal rest.

Let us now see the means which, in her hands, proved so marvellously successful.

When she took possession of her faubourg she had nothing to look for from her neighbours, the richest among whom would have been accounted poor elsewhere. She was a stranger in Paris, and knew no one in the richer quarters of the city to whom she could apply for aid. Moreover, the Revolution had spread ruin over every household; there was nothing but distress on every side. The old charitable institutions had disappeared in the general wreck, and new modes of relief were not yet in operation.

The First Consul was, however, busy at the work of reconstruction; and, at his command, the Sisters of St. Vincent resumed their place in the administration of the public charities. The house of which the Sœur Rosalie was a member was appointed to be one of the four houses of relief for that quarter. A dispensary was established there, a dépôt of clothes and linen, and a free school for the children of the poor.

The sisters had the care of dispensing the medicines, teaching the school, visiting the sick, and, in concert with the Dames de Charité, distributing the relief.

The Sœur Rosalie zealously discharged her new functions, and her house soon became a model. The

managers of the public alms soon perceived that no one better understood the condition and wants of the poor. They saw at once her profound knowledge of the evils and their remedies. She had a satisfactory answer to every question, a solution of every difficulty. They saw the aid which she received from them multiply a hundredfold in her hands; and, as she delighted to give them the honour and pleasure of their good works, she soon became their friend and adviser. Every thing was done by her advice, or rather through her hands. When she was appointed superioress, at the age of twenty-eight, the administrators of the Bureau de Charité, as a mark of their respect and gratitude, presented her with a complete *trousseau*, some portion of which, from the extreme economy with which she preserved it, remained in use to the day of her death.

The Sœur Rosalie made use of her habitual intercourse with the poor, in the relief of their bodily wants, to probe the deeper moral and spiritual evils which too often lay beneath. She had seldom need to ask their confidence; it was given freely to one who, they saw, sought out evil only to heal it. Her compassion, her patience, and her sympathy opened a way for her to the hardest heart.

Sometimes, however, her first attempts were unsuccessful, and she was contemptuously repulsed. She was neither surprised nor indignant, but waited a favourable moment to do some good office to those who insulted her; and she was almost always successful at last. More than once she took possession of a whole family, brought the father and mother to baptism, first communion, and matrimony, taught the little children their catechism, and prepared the grandfather for death. When, in the latter years of her life, her blindness deprived her of the happiness of visiting her poor, she still watched over them. She

made it a rule never to close her door against them ; she had always time for them, and they took precedence of every one. She was once suffering from a fever, under which the physician had ordered her to be kept perfectly quiet. The sister who had charge of the house refused on this account to allow a poor man of the neighbourhood to see her. He was very angry, and made a great noise, complaining that nobody would attend to him. The Sœur Rosalie heard him, and with the shivering of the fever upon her, hurried down to appease his anger and promise her good offices. After he was gone, she gently reproved the sister for not having called her ; and when she pleaded the orders of the physician, " My child," said she, " let us leave the physician to do his duty ; and let us do ours. Write at once for this poor man ; and, in future, always tell me when I'm wanted."

" But, mother, this man put himself into such a passion."

" Well, my child, the poor fellow has something else to do than to study good manners. We must not take offence at a hasty word or a little rudeness of manner ; these good people are much better than they seem."

Thus the poor of the Faubourg St. Marceau were accustomed to visit their mother several times a week, to tell her all their troubles, and consult her in all their difficulties. The bad came as well as the good, those who deserved her assistance as well as those who had abused it ; for the good sister repulsed no one. She told them the hardest truths ; but there was such gentleness in her reproofs, and such tenderness in her severity, that the guiltiest were moved and the most audacious subdued. They went away confessing their faults and promising to do better in future. Even when they relapsed again and again, she could not shut her heart against them. A con-

firmed drunkard had, notwithstanding repeated promises of amendment, again sold all the clothes and bedding which had been given him. The Sœur Rosalie at length determined to do nothing more for him. At the beginning of winter he came impudently to ask for a blanket, which was refused him. But no sooner was the Sœur Rosalie in bed, than she began to think that while she was warmly covered, the poor man was shivering without a blanket. This thought kept her awake all night; and the first thing in the morning she insisted on sending a blanket to the delinquent, in order, as she said, "that he and I may both be able to sleep to-night."

But her favourite place was by the bedside of the sick and dying. As soon as she heard that one of her poor people was ill, she hastened to him; or, if prevented by other duties, sent another sister to attend upon him. Her extreme and affectionate anxiety impressed even the physicians, accustomed as men of their profession are to scenes of suffering, and too often rendered callous thereby. Their reverence and admiration for her led them to pay the most vigilant attention to her *protégés*.

And how did the sufferers long for her visits; for the bright smile and tender tone of sympathy, which told even the most deserted and outcast that he had still a mother! If he recovered, his first visit was to Sœur Rosalie, whose watchful care had aided his convalescence as well as nursed his sick-bed.

If all remedies failed, she stood by his dying bed as the angel of hope and peace. Many a soul has been snatched from despair at that last awful moment by her patient love.

One who had dyed his hands in the blood of the first revolution was won by her at last on a sick-bed to make his peace with God. After his confession, he experienced, as so often happens in such cases, an

intense feeling of joy ; and never ceased till his dying hour to thank God for his conversion, which he attributed to the prayers of the sister, and also to a custom which he had always observed, but hitherto without knowing why. In his youth he had taken part in the horrible executions at Nantes, when hundreds of victims were drowned in the Loire. They marched to death singing a cantique to the Queen of Martyrs. He had never forgotten this hymn ; and through all the stormy vicissitudes of his life this man, a stranger as he was to every Christian thought and to every practice of piety, daily repeated the words, as if under the overmastering influence of some superior will. He died with them on his lips, mingled with a prayer for her who had opened to him the door of repentance and reconciliation.

Among those abodes of evil repute no sick man ever repulsed a priest sent by the Sœur Rosalie. Many a time were the haunts of vice changed into habitations of piety and prayer, where God found an altar on the sick-bed, and a sanctuary on the lips of the dying.

In many instances the labours of the sister produced no immediate result,—the seed seemed to have fallen on a barren rock ; but even in these cases it often happened that the living germ was found long years afterwards, when it was thought to have perished utterly.

In one of the most wretched streets of the Faubourg St. Marceau, an old-clothesman, who had grown immensely rich, had deserted his wife, and was living a most scandalous life. The only spark of good feeling he showed was towards his daughter, whom he sent to the sisters' school. Feeling his end approach, he sent for the Sœur Rosalie, who had nursed him during an illness in his early years of poverty, and had never heard of him since. She

now hastened to him, mounted a crooked staircase by the help of a rope which served for a banister, found her way into a dark room, where the miserable old man lay amid the remnants of his former calling and some few tokens of his present wealth.

"Mother," said he, "I am going to die. I want to leave my child what money I have; and I am afraid that others may take it from her when I am dead: I should like to give it to you to take care of for her."

"But, my good man, this is a lawyer's business; if you like, I will send one to you."

"No, no, I will have no lawyer. I know nobody but you; I have no trust in any body but you. Take this money, that I may die happy about my child."

The sister then spoke to him about his soul, and begged him to see a priest and make his peace with God.

"I want no priest," said the dying man, "to reconcile me with God. You are here; nobody can represent Him better than you do, and we can treat together of the things which relate to Him."

The sister had some difficulty in persuading the old man that she was neither lawyer nor priest. She accepted the deposit which he wished to intrust to her, and received from him 15,000 francs in notes and gold, which he had kept concealed under his bed. In exchange for this service, the poor man consented to see the priest; he made his confession, was reconciled to his wife, and died in peace, thanking God, Who had inspired him with the thought of sending for the Sœur Rosalie.

CHAPTER IV.

WORKS OF CHARITY.

WE have seen that the schools opened in the Faubourg St. Marceau for the education of the poor were placed in the hands of the Sisters of Charity. And these are ever the mightiest weapon of the warfare against the powers of darkness. If we would restore to a nation the Christian faith, ideas and customs which it has lost,—if we would reform its morals and regenerate its life,—let us not be discouraged by its resistance to good or its perseverance in evil. Hardened and obstinate as the men of our generation may be, their little children resist nothing, have taken up no party against any one, believe every word, hope in every promise, and open their hearts to all who hold out their arms to them. God sends them to the most depraved families to afford them some chance of good; and He commits them to the hand of Charity to console her for the evils of the present time, and to give her hope for the future.

The Sœur Rosalie's idea of education was the idea of the Catholic Church, which never separates the cultivation of the intellect from the rule which it is bound to obey, and which develops the conscience at the same time with the understanding.

She considered the culture of the mind only as a means of arriving at moral perfection, and knowledge only as an apprenticeship of virtue. She attached extreme importance to the schools under her direction, and neglected nothing which might serve to carry instruction into the families around her. But the education she desired to carry out was simple, serious, and religious,—suited to the condition of the children and their future employments. She did not

approve of what she called the exaggeration of the modern system of popular education, and distrusted the practice of giving lessons in general literature to the poorer classes. She especially regretted the time devoted in girls' schools to learning singing.

"Music," said she, "may be good for boys; it may soften the rudeness of the artisan, and substitute an innocent and peaceful recreation for the noisy revelry of the tavern. But it is dangerous to young girls; it tempts them to leave the quiet and modest retirement of home for the excitement and applause of the theatre. Why should we seek to awake in our poor children wants and tastes at variance with the condition in which their birth, their fortune, and the customs of society have placed them? Drawing, music, and all the rest of this superfluity of instruction, is good for nothing else but to disgust them with their needle, and to foster those ideas of *dé-classement* which are the torment of our working classes; for it is the misfortune of our artisans that no one in these days is content to remain in his own station."

The behaviour of the children in the Sœur Rosalie's schools was very remarkable. There was a modesty and reserve and courtesy among them which would have done credit to children of the highest rank. If the superioress excluded higher studies from the school, as she also excluded ribands and flounces, a spirit of piety, discipline, and order pervaded the little assembly: no children read more distinctly, wrote more correctly, or knew their prayers more perfectly; their clothes were neat, and their countenances open and intelligent.

In 1844, the Sœur Rosalie established a *crèche* for infants above the school in the Maison de Secours. This institution, then of recent origin, met with many objections, to which she attached no

weight. It seemed to her unjust to charge it with encouraging the mothers to neglect their duties, when it obliged them to come several times a day to nurse their babies, and only supplied their place during the hours when they are obliged to be at work.

“Why,” said she, “should we forbid to the poor, as a breach of their maternal duties, that which other mothers, who have not the excuse of their poverty and toil, do every day without blame or reproach?”

A great number of mothers, for the sake of their health, their liberty, or even their pleasure, leave their children to the care of hired nurses, who nurse them and watch them night and day.

The poor mother of the Faubourg St. Marceau does not send her new-born babe away from her, nor does she refuse after her day of toil to watch over it at night; only during her necessary absence she intrusts it to the tenderest and most watchful care in the *crèche* of the Sisters of Charity.

The *crèche* was the joy and recreation of the Sœur Rosalie. She showed it to friends and strangers, and visited it whenever she had a leisure moment. Her appearance set all the little multitude in movement; there was a crowd around her to ask for a kiss, a word, or a look; those who could walk threw themselves into her arms, or held out their little hands to her as they rolled about at her feet and kissed the hem of her habit.

One day she found a poor little forsaken child in her *crèche* who could hardly speak, and who was just about to be taken to the asylum of the Foundlings. As she stooped to embrace him, the child threw his little arms round her neck, crying, “Mother, mother.” Nothing would induce him to leave her. “He has called me mother,” said she; “I cannot

send him away." He did not go to the hospital: and as long as she lived the Sœur Rosalie was a mother to him.

She soon afterwards added an infant-school to the *crèche*; and delighted in drilling her small battalions, who no longer lay about in the gutters, or found their deaths under the carriage-wheels.

Full provision was thus made for the care of childhood; but the sister's heart yearned anxiously after the young girls who escaped from her eye after their first communion. All who have had the charge of a poor-school know the misery of meeting casually in the street faces last seen in the brightness of innocence, in the blessedness of first communion, now shrinking from the motherly eye which had been shunned so long, and never met since it rested on them at the altar of God.

The world and the devil have been too strong for these poor children. Without a hand to aid them, without a warning voice to bid them remember the lessons of their childhood, they sink into the great deep, and too often to rise no more.

To guard against this evil, the Sœur Rosalie had been often urged to found an asylum in which young girls might be sheltered from the dangers incident to the period of apprenticeship, so that they might not enter the world till of an age to provide for their own wants and avoid its temptations.

But, with the clear good sense which was one of her peculiar gifts, she saw the evil of removing children from the sphere marked out for them by Divine Providence. "Such asylums," she often said, "are not suitable to a neighbourhood where life is so hard and rough as with us." She preferred for her children at their entrance upon their career of toil the condition which would be theirs through life, — the hard bed, the scanty fare, the

rough duties of the household, the care of grandmother and little brother; then the apprenticeship with all its hardships,—the mistress's caprice, the companion's temper, the bustle and even the dangers of the world. She only desired to place good by the side of the evil, to set prayer against evil language and good counsel against bad example. She had long been seeking a way to avoid the sudden and violent separation between the children and the church and convent, and to extend to their apprenticeship the care which had watched over their childhood. The work of the *Patronage* was the realisation of her idea. It leaves the young girl in her family or at her trade during the whole week, and takes only that part of her time which belongs not to labour. The girls assemble at the convent on Sunday for their religious duties, and for joyous and innocent recreation. They are placed during the time of their apprenticeship under the care and protection of Christian ladies, whose office it is to visit them from time to time at their homes or at their work.

The Sœur Rosalie eagerly welcomed the plan of the *Patronage*, and adopted it at once at her house.

"It is a good work," said she, the first time it was spoken of to her; "God will prosper us; and we will begin next Sunday."

During the week her wonderful activity had prepared every thing; she made the mothers understand that the *Patronage* would be a great help to their daughters, showed the mistresses that it would foster obedience and the love of labour among their apprentices, awakened the young girls' memory of the happy years passed under her wing, and, by dint of contrivance, managed to find some hours in the day of one of the sisters to be devoted to the Sunday meetings. Her powerful voice, which was never

heard in vain, persuaded some charitable ladies that they could be doing nothing more useful to their families than to draw down the blessing of God upon them by visiting Him in His members.

On the following Sunday a number of young girls assembled in the court of the house of the *Epée-de-Bois*. They were dressed simply and modestly. Tickets were distributed among them, on which their mistresses might inscribe notes of their conduct during the week. Zealous ladies took the address of their parents and mistresses, and promised them a speedy visit at their homes or work-rooms. The *Sœur Rosalie* gave them the necessary information as to the character of each, the dispositions to be encouraged, and the tendencies to be guarded against. The day ended by amusements and the singing of *cantiques*, in which the sisters took a part; and so the work of the Patronage was founded.

It spread afterwards to every part of Paris. The apprentices carry on an active mission among their companions; and many a soul, rescued on the very brink of ruin by a kind word or a look of sympathy from a companion of her own age, blesses the work first carried into effect by the *Sœur Rosalie*.

This good work afterwards received a farther development by the formation of another association, placed under the protection of *Notre Dame de Bon Conseil*. This association was formed of those among the young apprentices, now become work-women, or perhaps mistresses, whose conduct had been most exemplary during their apprenticeship. They were now intrusted with the care of the younger girls. They became most useful assistants to the lady patronesses, and employed the time formerly spent at the Sunday meetings in visiting the poor or in other works of charity.

The *Sœur Rosalie* founded the first association

of the Bon Conseil in her house. She directed the associates herself, presided at their meetings, selected the families they were to visit, and taught them the art she understood so well of giving much relief with little means, and of multiplying that relief a hundredfold by the manner of bestowing it. She was never happier than when the associates of the Bon Conseil were giving her the account of their Sunday work. And it was a blessed thought to her that the poor child of the Faubourg St. Marceau, formerly neglected in her infancy and uncared for in her youth, could now find under the protection of the sisters the shelter of the *crèche*, the infant-school, the school, the Patronage, and the Association of the Bon Conseil, and thus pass through life under the fostering eye and hand of St. Vincent.

CHAPTER V.

GENERAL INFLUENCE OF THE SŒUR ROSALIE.

"A DAUGHTER of St. Vincent de Paul," the Sœur Rosalie was accustomed to say, "is a post on which all who are weary have a right to lay down their burdens." She loved her poor beyond all others; but she did not confine her charity or her good offices to them. Persons of all classes and nations had free access to her. She received all with courtesy, which after the first few sentences passed into affectionate kindness. She seemed to have nothing else to do than to attend to the wants of her visitors, no other care upon her mind than theirs.

Her ready sympathy attracted such multitudes to her, that nothing but her habitual recollection in God could have preserved her from being distracted

and disquieted by the multiplicity and variety of the affairs in which she was thus engaged.

Those who have no work to do but God's have no need to be hurried. In whatever shape it comes, it is His work, and the time and the strength to do it are sure to come from Him. Hurry and distraction come from divided aims and human motives.

She never refused any charitable work which presented itself: "Let us accept," she said to her sisters, "every thing that offers itself; God will send us means and money enough if we but make a good use of them."

She had a marvellous address in discovering and relieving the distress of those whose delicacy made them wish to conceal it. Among the crowd waiting in her little parlour, she noticed one sitting silent in the corner, afraid to be heard asking for an answer to an application made in writing the day before.

"Sir," said she, "this is for some one very near to you; our poor sisters are so tired that they cannot take it to him to-day. You are come just in time to do me this little service."

The visitor hastened away with the parcel, and casting his eyes upon the address discovered it to be his own!

One of her chief works of charity was that of giving the opportunity of exercising it to others. She asked of each what he could best give. Of one the use of his pen, of another his skill, of a third his influence, of all some few moments of time to be employed in carrying relief to the poor; thus learning how to bear evil, or to enjoy good fortune, and finding thus the explanation of the mystery concealed by the hand of God under the inequality of human conditions.

Some who were occupied all the week could only come on Sunday. To these she would say, "You

have assisted at Mass this morning : well now, give up Vespers. Sit down there, take a pen, and serve God in another way ;” and she dictated to them some of the arrears of her large correspondence. Then, teaching her pupils what she so admirably practised herself, she cast the light of her experience on their first footsteps in the career of good. She recommended to them a patience which never counts time lost which is spent in listening to the poor, because they are comforted by the very good-will which stays to hear the tale of their sorrows ; an indulgence ready rather to pity than to condemn the faults which arise from a wretched education ; and lastly, a courtesy most sweet to those who have been used only to slights and contempt.

“ O my dear children,” she often said to them, “ love the poor ; do not be hard upon them. It is all their fault, says the world : they are lazy, they are stupid, they are vicious, they are idle. By such words people excuse themselves from the strict obligation of charity. Hate sin, but love the poor. If we had passed through the trials of these poor people ; if our childhood had grown up, like theirs, far from every Christian inspiration,—we should be far worse than they are ; for the virtues which are so easy to us, are burdensome and continual sacrifices to them ; and to avoid doing evil, they are obliged to resist not only the attractions of pleasure but the tyranny of want. God will hold us responsible for the faults with which we so severely reproach the poor, for their envy and ill-will. It is in your power to make them bless your privileges, and love your superiority : let them find you more loving, more helpful, in proportion as you are richer and more intelligent. They will measure the length of the way you have travelled to approach them ; and will find a motive for gratitude, and not for enmity, in the distance be-

tween you. Remember," added she, "that the poor are still more grateful for kindness than for alms. The surest way to gain their confidence is to show them consideration. Even if you have serious fault to find with them, always carefully avoid any harsh or contemptuous word."

She insisted upon great circumspection and delicacy in touching upon religion, for fear of exciting hypocrisy or the false semblance of conversion; and she repressed the mistaken zeal of those who desired to give more than they could justly afford.

"We must pay our debts," said she, "before we give alms; and be just before we are generous."

Her advice was eagerly listened to by youths of all classes; students in law and medicine, pupils of the Normal and Polytechnic Schools, came continually to her to ask for employment in some good work, or to give account of one accomplished.

"I have united them all," said she joyfully, "for the service of God; they have all been labouring for His glory. What a good day's work for them!"

She found some good work for the poor themselves to do, and this was one of her principal means of amelioration. A child to take care of, a sick-bed to watch, any little service within their power to render to a neighbour, helped to lighten the load of their own misery, and prevent it from hardening them into selfishness. They felt proud of the mission intrusted to them, and more grateful for the benefits they were allowed to confer than for those which they themselves received.

But it was not the poor alone who went away soothed and strengthened from the little parlour of the Rue Epée-de-Bois. "O my sisters," she would say, after many a long conversation with some of those whom the world counts happy, "if people

did but know the heartaches of the rich, how they would pity them!" Her resource for them, too, was to send them to forget their own sorrows in ministering to the wants of others.

Not a few priests and bishops of France began their work for souls by visiting, as young men, the poor of the Faubourg St. Marceau under the direction of the Sœur Rosalie. Among these was Mgr. Dupuch, who has but now gone to receive the reward of that charity to which he sacrificed every thing upon earth. He gave proof even then of that love of the poor for which he was one day to resign the episcopal throne of St. Augustine. The Sœur Rosalie used to reproach him with not knowing how to keep his accounts. "If he is ever a Bishop," said she, "he will give away his cross and his mitre."*

She one day received a message from him begging her to send him something to wear. He had been surprised that morning in bed by a poor man who had scarcely clothes to cover him, and had not been able to resist giving him his coat and trousers.

There was no kind of trouble which seemed out of the reach of the Sœur Rosalie. As the men of her quarter used to say, she had a very long arm.

A young girl had escaped from her home in a distant town. She was supposed to be concealed in Paris under some very evil influence. She was searched for in every direction, but in vain; the police had lost all trace of her. A priest who was consulted by her family said in reply, "No one but the Sœur Rosalie will be able to restore your child:" and, in fact, the fugitive was discovered in the course of a few days. The sister sent for her, spoke to her with that authority which the most hardened could rarely resist; and at the end of the conversation the

* Mgr. Dupuch was Bishop of Algiers.

poor girl herself begged to go into a most severe retreat to expiate her fault. The Sœur Rosalie herself took charge of her, watched over her, strengthened her good resolutions, encouraged her repentance, and soon led her back to her mother reconciled with God. The author of all this misery hastened to the Rue Epée-de-Bois, furious at the loss of his victim, with threats and insult on his lips; but a word and a look from the sister calmed his passion; and she represented his crime to him with such force and dignity, that shame took the place of anger; and bowing his head before her, the wretched man acknowledged his sin, and besought her to aid him in his repentance.

In a single visit she gained the confidence of an unhappy old man who, under an evil influence, had separated himself from his family, and persuaded him to leave to his rightful heir a large sum of money which he was concealing in order to bestow it upon a most unworthy person. She cured a rich man so effectually of his tendency to avarice, that she received a large sum from him weekly to be dispensed among the poor, and on one occasion he rescued a whole family from ruin at her request. A carrier had lost the horse on which the whole maintenance of his family depended. His wife, who was an old pupil of the Sœur Rosalie, came to her in tears, deploring the disaster, their inability to remedy it, and the despair of the poor husband, who in the madness of his grief was cursing Providence and threatening to throw himself into the river. The sister went at once to the man whom she had taught to be charitable, explained to him the misfortune which had befallen this industrious family, and pleaded for them so effectually that she obtained a much better horse for them than that which they had lost.

She had a wonderful art in extracting good works

from people in the way most pleasing to themselves.

A foreign lady who was both pious and rich, and much attached to her, had a particular liking for certain flowers. The sister took advantage of this fancy to benefit a gardener in the neighbourhood who was in great distress. She ordered an immense bouquet from him of these flowers, and told him to bring it at the hour when she expected the lady to visit her.

When the lady arrived, she called him in, saying: "Here is a good man who is come to bring you a bouquet from his garden; I have promised him a welcome."

The lady was delighted, complimented the gardener on his good taste, and sent him away with a sum sufficient to support his whole family for a considerable time.

On another occasion, when a young lady went into raptures about the beauty of a new-born infant:

"Providence," said she, "intends you to be its godmother." The young girl recoiled from the responsibility of the office.

"Fear nothing, mademoiselle," replied the sister, "God will never speak of it to you except to thank you."

Men most opposed in their opinions to the faith of the *Sœur Rosalie* were gained by her influence. The most sceptical laid aside their distrust in her presence. When they had once seen her, they no longer denied the existence of virtue, but began to believe in her as a first step to the belief of the God by whom she was inspired. Those even who never attained to faith became ardent disciples of the Sisters of Charity. When, as she perceived in them a just and elevated mind and a sincere love of goodness, she accepted their goodwill, associated them with her

good works, and often succeeded in infusing calmness and hope into souls wearied by doubt and disgusted with system. The most stubborn wills and independent characters acknowledged her authority; and granted to her what could be gained from them by none besides.

Her extraordinary influence over the minds of others was once exerted to save the life of a fellow-creature in a very remarkable manner. During the foreign occupation of Paris in 1814, a Russian troop occupied the horse-market. A rumour was spread throughout the neighbourhood that a soldier had been condemned to death for some grave military offence, and that the sentence was about to be executed. The report reached the ears of the Sœur Rosalie, who, taking an old woman with her, traversed the Russian camp, and asked to speak to the general. She was instantly admitted, and throwing herself at his feet, she implored him to pardon the criminal.

"You know him, then, and love him," said the general, surprised at the intensity of her interest in a foreigner.

"Yes, I love him," replied she,— "I love him as a brother redeemed by the blood of our Lord Jesus Christ; and I am ready to give my life for his."

The soldier's pardon was granted; and the sister hurried back to the *Maison de Secours*, astonished at what she had just done, and almost frightened at her own audacity.

It often happened that people of the world came to the Sœur Rosalie, not to bring her alms, or to ask advice on subjects of importance, but to make some insignificant inquiry; and won by the charm of her conversation, they would forget themselves while they talked with her.

The sisters were sometimes tempted to complain of

the fine ladies who took up so much of their mother's time, to so little purpose, as it seemed. But the visit was not lost; many a young woman has returned from that little parlour with an idea of her own responsibilities and of the sufferings of others, which had never crossed her mind before. She would go home with a certain uneasiness on her mind as to the lawfulness of her expenses, and with a conscience troubled as to her way of employing her fortune. She had learned how much suffering might have been spared by the money squandered upon one of her caprices; she had cast a terrified glance at the account one day to be given of the luxurious table, of which one day's cost would have fed whole households for months, and of the magnificent dress worn at a single ball, the price of which would have afforded a winter's clothing to many a shivering family. In future the poor had a larger share in her purse; and she no longer turned an unwilling ear to the many applications for aid to those good works which depend upon the goodwill of many, though they ask but a slight sacrifice from each.

But the parlour of the Rue Epée-de-Bois received guests of a far different stamp. One of the young men who were allowed to act as secretaries to the Sœur Rosalie attempted once to keep an account of the number admitted there on a single day; he counted as far as 500, and the day was not yet over. All the conditions and accidents of humanity were crowded together in that narrow space. The extremes of good and ill fortune, of weakness and power, met together there to do each other good, the one bringing what was needed by the other.

It was a touching sight to see the ambassador and the bashful poor, the rag-seller and the marshal of France, all received with the same kindness, all bringing some trouble to be relieved, some grief

to be soothed ; and carrying away with them sweeter thoughts, better hopes, and greater courage to bear up under the burden of life.

More than once has a father been rewarded for some good work of his own by meeting his son, whom he had supposed to be far otherwise employed, on an errand of mercy at the *Maison de Secours*.

How many strange confidences have the walls of that little room received ! How many good works have they inspired ! How many tears have been shed there ! How many enemies have there renounced enmities which they had supposed to be eternal ! How many children, condemned by their birth never to know a mother's care, have received there, from repentance or charity, the love and smile of a mother ! They who visited that parlour always left it better than they came in—the proud man humbler, the selfish less full of self.

The presence of the *Sœur Rosalie* swayed the hearts of all, all eyes rested upon that serene and loving countenance. Her language was simple, her manner reserved. At first sight there seemed nothing to distinguish her from others ; but it was soon apparent that this simple exterior concealed a most superior intellect. Her sweetness was full of majesty.

She saw at a glance with whom she had to deal. She began with the poorest of her visitors ; an old man received an admission into the Hospital of the Incurables, or the Asylum of the Little Sisters of the Poor, or the child of a poor widow into the Orphanage of *Menilmontant*. A safe mistress was pointed out to an apprentice, or a shop to a needlewoman out of work. Then the sister distributed their lists to the *Dames de Charité*, received the report of her young people as to the poor whom they had been sent to visit, thanked one for a service done, obtained

a promise of aid from another, answered all the questions which were addressed to her, and finished her audience by the despatch of her numerous letters and commissions, which a number of willing hands were always ready to carry and execute.

Not a minute of all these long hours was wasted, not a word but had its work of charity to fulfil; and these audiences went on for fifty years, without any other interruption than illness. No one was ever repulsed or neglected, no business was ever forgotten or overlooked.

The most distinguished men in the country for literature, talent, or position, would seize the slightest pretext to pay a visit to the Sœur Rosalie. She received them all with the same uniform simplicity and politeness which at all times characterised her intercourse with others, and seldom let them go without eliciting some good work from them, and giving them a great desire to repeat their visit.

At her first arrival in Paris she brought with her a letter from her mother to the Abbé Emery, the holy director of St. Sulpice, an old friend of her family. The Abbé Emery had learned in prayer and meditation how to speak the truth to the great ones of the earth; and when all men held their peace before Napoleon, he dared to defend the rights of the Church and of the Holy See against his attacks, and won his esteem by resisting his will. As soon as he saw the young novice, he laid aside all idea of complying with her mother's wish by opposing her vocation; he appreciated the elevation and sanctity of her character, and foresaw what she would one day become. He went to see her daily in her novitiate, and honoured her with his friendship to the day of his death. When she was placed in the Faubourg St. Marceau he often came to see her, took interest in her good works, conversed with her on the sub-

ject of the most important work intrusted to his care, and took counsel with her how best to ameliorate the condition of the poor. The holy priest felt his zeal rekindled and his courage strengthened by conversing with the humble daughter of St. Vincent.

The Sœur Rosalie was also frequently visited by a man whose charity she loved, and whose genius she admired. In the days when he was the hope and joy of the Church, M. de Lamennais attached himself much to her, associated her in his alms-deeds, and drew from his conversations with her many of the thoughts which he added as a commentary to the *Imitation of Jesus Christ*. All ties were broken between them on the day when he denied his faith and deserted the Church; but the Sœur Rosalie could not forget him, for she had seen him among the poor. When he was imprisoned, she did not hesitate to visit him. He seemed surprised and touched, received her politely and affectionately; but he soon gave a turn to the conversation which effectually shut out any thing like confidence, and finished by bitter invectives against the men and the doctrines most deeply revered by the Sœur Rosalie. When she left him he expressed no desire to see her again. She deeply regretted the ill success of her visit; but still loved to dwell upon the good service once rendered by this eloquent writer to the Church, and fondly hoped that as a recompense he would yet be rescued from the abyss into which he had fallen. "His repentance," she would often say, "will be a stronger witness for the Church than even his innocence."

After that visit M. de Lamennais was always afraid to see her again. Her name having once been mentioned before him, in reference to some information which he wished to obtain, he refused with great vehemence to apply to her, and utterly declined any further intercourse with her.

At the tidings of his last illness, the compassion of the sister was moved; she hoped for a while that at the light of another world his eyes would open, and that his ears might be once more accessible to the truths which he had once so vigorously defended. But a wall of iron had arisen between the dying man and the handmaid of the poor. No breath from on high came to reanimate the dry bones and soften his obdurate soul; he had spoken his own doom on the day when he refused to see the Sœur Rosalie.

She visited another prisoner, who had also been a frequent visitor of her parlour, M. l'Abbé Combalot. But he had not been condemned for attacking society or religion; he had nothing to retract or to repent of. Since his imprisonment, as before, his eloquent voice has not ceased to preach the faith which the Sœur Rosalie believed and the charity which she practised. From the pulpit of St. Sulpice, on the day of her death, he exclaimed to his sorrowing audience, "I was in prison, and the Sœur Rosalie visited me. Like a charitable dove she brought me my food twice every day."

Donoso Cortes, Marquis of Valdegamas, had early drunk to the full of the new doctrines and the pleasures of this world. He was soon sated with the draught. His upright nature and lofty intellect had taught him the nothingness of human promises, and their inadequacy to save individuals or nations. He had turned to God, and called in religion to the aid of society. In this new path he had displayed talents of the first order and surpassing eloquence. Having been sent by Spain as her ambassador at Paris, he was soon sought and loved by all who knew him. Unbending in his opinions, but full of charity and kindness in his heart, he had quickly gained the admiration of many and the affection of all; for even those who were repelled by the exclu-

siveness of his mind, were won in their own despite by the largeness of his heart. But all this satisfied him not; he often complained of thus spending his days in mere worldly intercourse, and trembled, he said, at the account to be given at the tribunal of God, when, to the inquiry as to the use made of the time given him to work out his salvation, he should have nothing to answer but this, "Lord, I have paid visits to my acquaintances."

He heard the Sœur Rosalie spoken of, and felt a desire to know her. One of his friends took him to the Rue Epée-de-Bois, and he was much impressed by the first interview. He felt that there was something there which was wanting to his life. These two souls understood each other. He no longer complained of the visits he had to pay; for he left every week the region of power, elegance, and diplomacy to visit her, whom he called his *director*. He received from her a list of poor persons to visit, went on foot through the faubourg, sat down by the bedsides of the sick, pressed the hand of the sorrowful, took the little children in his arms, gladdened the hearts of the whole family by words animated by the accent and the imagination of the South, and then returned joyfully to give account of his discoveries to the Sœur Rosalie.

As long as he was in health, no political or official occupations ever stood in the way of this charitable engagement. He arrived at the Maison de Secours punctually at the given day and hour, nothing ever interrupted or even shortened his visits. When he fell ill, he sent with the greatest exactness the money which he could no longer bring himself; and was occupied to his last hour with the thought of his friends in the Faubourg St. Marceau. He spoke of them continually to the Sœur de Bon Secours who watched beside him, and mingled their remembrance with the

holy thoughts which, like guardian-angels, bore him sweet company and smoothed his way into the other world. When the illness grew serious, the Sœur Rosalie in her turn left her faubourg for the Rue de Courcelles, and came to return the visits which the ambassador had so often paid to her and to her poor. Her prayers could not avert his death; but she was present at his last moments, as if to bear witness before the Sovereign Judge of the good works which they had done together. The sentiments of the dying man were admirable for their faith and resignation. When they wanted to send for a physician, "What is the use of it?" said he, kissing his crucifix; "I want nothing now but God." Then, casting a glance upon the world, through which his path had been so rapid and so brilliant, he said, "Of what use has the world been to me? What consolation has it afforded me? Who has soothed me but this pious nurse, whose every word has taught me patience? Who has helped me but the saints?" added he, pointing to the relic of St. Vincent which the Sœur Rosalie had given him. "Let the poor pray for me: do not let them forget me."

These were his last words. The Sœur Rosalie heard them, received his last look, and left the house of death with the hope that the poor had now another protector in heaven.

The Sœur Rosalie was as prompt in aiding works of charity begun by others as indefatigable in carrying out her own. She had none of that narrow spirit which sees nothing but the difficulties of a new undertaking, and makes of every difficulty an impossibility. Neither was there any thing rash or adventurous in her character. She saw at a glance the difficulties which beset any subject, not to quail before, but to overcome them. She rejected at once any project which she saw to be chimerical, or which

was to be supported by any form of worldly dissipation. "I do not like the devil," she said, "to be forced to give alms to God." But at the same time she was always ready to aid any work of real charity; and had a wonderful tact in finding out workers to carry it out, and in giving to each the part which he could best fill. She knew too well how to make the most of the least aptitude and the lowest degree of devotion, not to approve the system of association, which accepts from each the little he is able to give, and opens a rich treasury to him in exchange.

When the Society of St. Vincent de Paul, unconscious of the work before it, assembled for the first time in a small room, yet too large for its numbers; when five or six young men, who had saved their faith from the antichristian influences of the time, sought to shelter it under the safeguard of charity,—they called the Sœur Rosalie to their aid. She knew them all; several had served their apprenticeship of charity under her: she now directed their first steps in their new career, and never ceased to take a deep interest in their progress.

Politics, which so fiercely divided France, entered not the parlour of the Rue Epée-de-Bois. The Sœur Rosalie was the almoner of successive sovereigns; Charles X., the queen of Louis Philippe, Napoleon III. and the Empress Eugénie, all applied to her in the distribution of their bounty. The dauphiness especially often took counsel with her as to the numerous charitable works in which that great and good princess sought consolation for her many sorrows. The sister loved to repeat a lesson which she once received from her, and never forgot. The dauphiness had charged her with the payment of a pension to a man whom she discovered to be unworthy. She thought it right to suspend the payment of the money till she had told his benefactress of the fact. "My

“dear sister,” replied the daughter of Louis XVI., “we must help the good that they may continue good, and the bad that they may grow better; continue to pay the pension to that man.”

She was visited in March 1854 by Napoleon III. A little time before, to her own great annoyance and to the delight of her poor, she had received the cross of the Legion of Honour. The Empress accompanied the Emperor; and, at the request of the sister, promised that the Infant School about to be opened at the Maison de Secours should be intrusted to the care of the Sisters of Charity, instead of being placed, as was proposed, in secular hands.

CHAPTER VI.

CHOLERA AND INSURRECTION.

IN 1832 the tidings spread through France that the cholera was at the door. A universal panic seized upon the people; wild tales of poisoning and murder mingled with the real horrors of the disease, and popular frenzy added to the sharpness of this scourge of God.

The Sœur Rosalie herself dreaded the approach of the visitation; she feared for her sisters, for her poor, for her country, and prayed that the chalice might pass away. But no sooner did the cholera appear and strike down its first victim than all her terrors disappeared. During the whole period of the calamity neither fear, nor trouble, nor weakness touched her soul. Ever the first in toil and watching, she strengthened the hands and calmed the minds of those in authority, and gradually quieted the fears of the poor. In the height of the popular

madness, her name proved a safeguard to those who were endangered by it. A physician was accompanying a cholera patient to the hospital. He was recognised in the street, and the cry instantly arose, "Down with the murderer, the poisoner!" The mob pressed around him with threats and insults. In vain did he lift up the cloth which covered the patient's face, and try to prove to them that he was endeavouring to save and not to destroy him. The sight of the dying man added to their fury,—the cries and threats were redoubled; a workman was just springing upon him with a deadly weapon, when, having exhausted all his arguments in vain, the doctor suddenly exclaimed, "I am a friend of the Sœur Rosalie." "O, that's a different matter," replied a hundred voices at once: the crowd opened and let him pass.

The second incursion of the cholera in 1849 carried less terror with its first approach, but was even more fatal to the Faubourg St. Marceau than that of 1832. Five hundred and fifty persons died in one parish in a single day, without counting children. For more than a week the sisters never sat down to table, and had not a moment's sleep. The Sœur Rosalie was now what she had been before, calm and courageous in the midst of the calamity the approach of which she had dreaded.

The Orphan Asylum was founded at this time in the Rue Pascal. Seventy-nine children were received there in the course of a few days. The Sœur Rosalie went from house to house gathering in the poor children whom the terrible plague had robbed, often within the course of a few hours, of both father and mother. She organised the house, and took care that nothing should be wanting to its little inhabitants. Thanks to her care, and to the generous sacrifices which she called forth, the asylum rapidly outgrew

the limits of the house in which it was begun. It was removed to Menilmontant, an airy situation outside the walls of Paris; and in its whole order and administration bears the traces of the wise and loving mind which presided over its beginning.

The rule which requires that the children be apprenticed as soon as they have made their first communion is the result of her cherished conviction of the danger of over-refining the children of the poor, and unfitting them for their calling and position in life.

There was another evil, which the Sœur Rosalie dreaded for her poor more than the cholera. The Faubourg St. Marceau was rife with all the elements which find vent in riots and revolutions. In 1830 and 1848, when the people enjoyed their hour of sovereignty, she exerted her influence to prevent them from abusing their victory. When the rebels acknowledged no other authority than their own, they still recognised her voice; on days when not even the public force could make its way into those narrow streets, which seemed formed for civil strife, she made her way unchallenged, stopped the construction of barricades, and caused paving-stones, already uplifted, to be restored to their places. She saved more than one life from the popular fury.

When the priests were insulted in the streets, the churches threatened, and the archbishop's palace taken by storm and destroyed, her house sheltered many a religious, whose only crime was that of devoting himself day and night for the salvation of those who cursed him. She offered an asylum also to the archbishop, now compelled in his own diocese to hide himself like a criminal, and who did not appear again till the cholera called him to the pulpit of Notre Dame to avenge himself on his enemies by adopting their orphan children.

When she spoke of these days of madness, it was always to extenuate the faults of the misguided rioters. "They did not know," said she, "that we had all these holy priests in our house; but if they had known it, they would have helped us to protect them." And, in fact, on one of the bloody days of June some nuns devoted to the education of children, terrified at the report that their house was to be burnt, applied to the Sœur Rosalie. She bade them be of good heart; and on the same evening a guard of armed men was stationed before the house, the leader charging his men to make no noise for fear of disturbing the nuns and the little girls. The order was punctually obeyed.

After the tumults which disquieted the early part of the reign of Louis Philippe, men of the most opposite parties were accused of taking part in the revolt, and condemned to death. Many of these applied to the Sœur Rosalie, and besought her to save them. She procured disguises for them and trusty guides, by which means she succeeded in rescuing several.

She was denounced as having aided rebels to escape the pursuit of justice. M. Gisquet, the Prefect of the Police, signed an order for her arrest, and gave it to his first agent to be put into immediate execution. The agent implored him to refrain from this insult to the mother of the poor. "Her arrest," added he, "would raise the Faubourg St. Marceau, and become the signal for a revolt which we might not be able to quell; all the people would take up arms for her."

"This Sœur Rosalie is very powerful, then," said the prefect; "well, I will go and see her."

He went immediately to the Rue Epée-de-Bois, made his way through the crowd which, as usual, was waiting at the door of the parlour, and without

giving his name, asked to speak to the superioress. The sister, who had never seen him, received him with her accustomed politeness, begged him to wait till she had done with her poor, and then returned to her unknown visitor, apologised for having kept him waiting so long, and asked what she could do to serve him.

"Madam," replied M. Gisquet, "I do not come to ask a service, but rather to offer one to you. I am the prefect of police. You have seriously compromised yourself; in contempt of the laws, you have effected the escape of an officer of the ex-royal guard, who had deserved the severest punishment by his open rebellion against the government. I had given an order for your arrest, which I have withdrawn at the entreaty of one of my agents; but I am come to ask of you how you have dared thus to place yourself in opposition to the law."

"Monsieur le préfet," replied the Sœur Rosalie, "I am a Sister of Charity. I have no standard; I come to the aid of the unfortunate wherever I find them; and I promise you that, should you ever be in the like trouble, and come to me for aid, it shall not be refused you."

In revolutionary times, these words were not a vain promise. M. Gisquet could not help smiling; and at the same time, perhaps, trembled a little in his secret soul. The sister tried to make the magistrate understand that the duties of charity are not always identical with those of police, and that after a battle she is always on the side of the wounded and the vanquished. The prefect could not be brought to agree with her; but he was delighted with her frankness; he was not proof against the influence she exerted over all who came near her. He thanked her for her explanation; but said, as he was taking leave, "I am willing to overlook the past; but pray

do not begin again ; it would be too painful to act against you."

"Monsieur le préfet," replied the Sœur Rosalie, as she accompanied him to the door, "indeed I cannot promise you. I know that if such a work of charity were again to present itself, I should not have the courage to refuse it. A daughter of St. Vincent can have no right under any circumstances to fail in charity."

In the course of the following week, one of the chiefs of La Vendée came to thank her for having given shelter and food to one of his companions in misfortune. While he was with her, the commissary of police came in. By a rapid sign, she made the Vendean understand the danger of his situation and the necessity of a speedy departure, detained the commissary for more than an hour by the charm of her conversation, and thus gave the fugitive time to escape pursuit. A few days afterwards, the commissary reproached her with the ill turn she had done him.

"What would you have, monsieur?" replied she. "I did it as much for your sake as for his. I wanted to spare you the pain of taking, and the trouble of guarding him. Was I not right?"

Her influence was shortly afterwards exerted in behalf of the reigning authority. An imprudent measure had roused the populace against an agent of authority ; his house was surrounded by the mob, and he was afraid to leave it. The thought occurred to him to send to the Sœur Rosalie. She came instantly, addressed the rioters by name, scolded them for leaving their work for so bad a reason, and represented the misery they would bring upon themselves and their families. Her voice prevailed ; every one returned to his work, the riot was stifled in its birth, and the official recovered his liberty.

During the famine of 1847, which prepared the way for the revolution of February, the Sœur Rosalie did wonders for the relief of her people. She soothed and calmed them; and while she trembled at the dangerous doctrines and evil principles which came to aggravate the horrors of famine, she answered for the moderation and good conduct of her faubourg. The opening of the year 1848 seemed to justify her hopes. Instead of taking part in the general disturbance, the men of St. Marceau kept guard before the house of the sisters, and in their zealous defence had nearly shot the chaplain, who came in a secular dress to say Mass for the community.

Unhappily, however, in the faubourg St. Marceau, as in all other parts of Paris, every tavern became a club, in which the workmen, having nothing else to do, passed their time; and they soon became the tools of the agitators whose aim was to stir up the multitude to violence. Many figured behind the barricades against their will. Unknown leaders climbed from story to story of the thickly-peopled houses, snatched the labourer from his bed, enrolled him by force in the troop which was waiting for him at the door, put a musket into his hand with the threat of shooting him if he refused to make use of it, and thus condemned him to homicide on pain of death. The sinister countenances and terrible gestures of these heralds of revolt so painfully impressed the Sœur Rosalie, that, when giving the history of these sad days at a later period, she said, "I think that if any one had descended that moment into hell, he would not have found a single devil there; they were all in our streets. I shall never forget their faces."

The Sœur Rosalie and her sisters were themselves under arms. As they had been unable to

prevent the conflict, they did all in their power to soften its horrors and diminish the number of its victims. Their house became a hospital, where the wounded of both parties received all the cares of the most tender charity.

Numbers of women had come early in the morning to place their husbands under the safe keeping of the sisters, in order to preserve them from the tyrannical compulsion of the chiefs of the insurrection. The cellars, the granary, every hiding-place in the house, was filled with poor people, who had fled rather from crime than from danger.

When, after the re-establishment of peace, a search was made for concealed arms, the commissary of police came to the Maison de Secours, and said to the superioress that his visit was only one of form, as he did not expect to find any arms there. "You are mistaken," said she; "we have a great many." And she showed him a quantity of muskets and sabres piled up in one of the rooms. They were arms which had been left by those who had taken refuge there during the conflict; others she had herself rescued from hands likely to make a bad use of them.

During those terrible days, wounded men were brought in continually to receive the charitable aid of the sisters. They recognised but too often faces which they had known in better days, now convulsed with the agony of death, and too often with the rage of conflict still impressed upon them. They sought by every means in their power to bring the poor sufferers to a better disposition for death, and in many instances succeeded in drawing forth one of those tears of contrition which even at the last moment are accepted by Him from whose grace they flow.

In the heat of the conflict, an officer of the Garde Mobile, who had fought bravely through the day,

led his soldiers to the attack of a barricade of the Rue Mouffetard, which runs at right angles with the Rue Epée-de-Bois. He mounted first to the assault; a murderous discharge from the insurgents forced his troop to give way, and he found himself alone on the other side of the barricade. Hopeless of aid from his soldiers, who supposed that he had fallen, and unable to make head alone against his enemies, he had just time to spring through the open gate of the Maison de Secours, and throw himself into the midst of the sisters as a refuge opened to him by Providence. A band of insurgents had recognised and followed him, and arrived almost at the same moment. The sisters, with the superioress at their head, threw themselves instinctively between the victim and his murderers. The insurgents recoiled for a moment before this unexpected rampart. They all knew the Sœur Rosalie, and began a dispute with her for the life of their enemy, which lasted for nearly an hour. They mingled the most atrocious threats against him with expressions of respect for her, whom in the height of their fury they still called *mother*.

"We will have our prisoner," cried they; "he has spilt the blood of our brethren like water; nothing but his death shall satisfy us for the evil he has done."

As the sister represented the horror of killing an unarmed man, and staining the threshold of that house of mercy with blood,

"Let us take him," they replied. "We will not kill him here; we will take him into the street, and give him the reward of his deeds."

And, spite of prayers and promises and the most touching appeals to their compassion, the insurgents advanced nearer and nearer, closing in upon their prey, till, to make their aim more sure, they had

rested their muskets upon the shoulders of the sisters. Their fingers were upon the triggers, the fatal volley just about to pour into the court, when the Sœur Rosalie threw herself upon her knees.

“For fifty years,” said she, “I have devoted my life to you; for all the good that I have done to you, to your wives and to your children, I ask of you the life of this man.”

At this sight, at this cry, the weapons were raised; the troop recoiled, as if struck with remorse; a hurrah of admiration escaped from the lips blackened with powder, and tears started into the eyes just now so pitiless. The prisoner was saved.

Two days afterwards order was restored, and the insurgents were awaiting in prison the punishment of their rebellion.

The court of the Maison de Secours was filled with women and children crying for their husbands and fathers, with no earthly hope but in the Sœur Rosalie. She wept with them, and promised to intercede in their behalf. She ultimately succeeded in obtaining the release of those who had been led away by others, and visited in their prison those whose liberation she was unable to effect.

Among them was a workman in whom she felt extreme interest. Before the revolt he had been accounted one of the best men in the neighbourhood; but he had given way to a moment of frenzy, and lay under most grievous charges; so that all intercession in his favour had been fruitless, and he had nothing to look for but a speedy and dreadful death.

His little girl—a very sweet child of five years old—attended the sisters’ school. She came there crying every day after her father’s arrest. It was impossible to comfort her.

Just at this time General Cavaignac came to visit the Sœur Rosalie. She took him to the school, and

calling the little girl to her, "My child," said she, "this is a gentleman who, if he pleases, can give you back your father."

The child knelt down, joined her little hands, and in a voice choked with sobs cried, "O my good monsieur, give us back father; he is so good; we want him so much."

"But," said the general, "I am afraid he has done something very bad."

"No, indeed, indeed, mother says *no*; and besides, I promise you he will never do it again. Pray, pray, let him come back, and I will love you dearly."

The beseeching looks of the sister aided the child's words. The general left the room deeply moved, and in the course of a few days the prisoner was restored to his family.

CHAPTER VII.

VIRTUES OF THE SŒUR ROSALIE.

IF we inquire the secret of the marvellous influence exercised by the Sœur Rosalie over the hearts and minds of men of all kinds and degrees, we shall find it in that large gift of human sympathy to which we have before alluded. It is not given by sanctity alone; many holy religious have devoted themselves unreservedly to the service of their brethren without ever exercising that ascendancy over the world.

The charity of Sœur Rosalie flowed from the Heart of Jesus Christ,—it was human as well as heavenly; she loved her poor in God as the suffering members of her Saviour, she loved them also as a mother loves her children, with all a mother's heart, emotions, and tears. She had the supernatural devotion and abnegation of the saint, she had the exquisite sensibility and sublime weakness of the woman.

Though so long familiarised to all manner of suffering, the sight of it was as painful to her at the end of her life as in her early youth. She hungered and thirsted with her poor, shared all their vicissitudes of joy or sorrow, and felt such pleasure in relieving them, that she used to say she deserved no other recompense. When she lost her sight, she said, "God has made me blind because I took too much pleasure in looking at my poor." Sometimes at dinner-time she could not sit down to table: "There is something that chokes me," she would say, "and takes away all appetite. It is the thought of all the families who are wanting bread."

The surgeon asked her, after she had gone through an operation for cataract, whether she had felt much pain.

"I did not suffer from your hand," she replied; "but I could not help thinking that my poor are not so well treated as I am. If they have an operation to undergo, they must leave their family and go to a hospital. They are not surrounded like me by sisters and friends; and this thought gives me pain."

In the delirium of her last illness the thought of her poor still haunted her; the one idea discernible amid her wandering words was that she was visiting them.

Hers was not the charity which is roused to exertion only by famine, pestilence, or revolution; it was for every-day use, and as gracious and delicate in its attention to the minutest want as heroic in its struggle with moral and physical evil. She was prodigal of care and consideration for the feelings of the most wretched of her petitioners, and sought to please as well as to relieve them. She would stop in the street to hush a crying child, and showed an unwearied indulgence for those little annoying faults which are sometimes harder to forgive than greater ones.

A family had tired out the patience of every body by their importunity and discontent. The sister, who was visiting them, proposed to get them sent back into the country.

"That," said the superioress, "would be getting rid of a heavy and wearisome cross. I should be afraid of dealing unfaithfully with God."

If she had ever showed the least impatience, or answered an importunate demand with any degree of quickness, she was so distressed that she sought to make immediate reparation by doubling the alms which had been asked. The good people knew her weakness on this point, and would say, laughing, "Try to make our mother angry, and you will get what you want."

She never thought she could do enough for her *children*, as she called them, and often said to the sisters after some poor person had left her, "You saw how badly I treated that poor man, how little kindness and consideration I showed him."

Like a true daughter of St. Vincent, she never hesitated, fervent as was her piety, to leave her devotions for the service of the poor. She often asked the sisters to leave the chapel to accompany her on her visits of charity.

"Let us learn," said she, "as our holy patron teaches us, to leave God for God, and prayer for the poor."

She would sometimes take a sister away from her class to attend to some pressing want, bidding the children be very good while their mistress was assisting some poor people in the neighbourhood. The little girls would remain quite still, as if they had wished by their good behaviour to take part in the work of charity.

Sometimes, after reproaching the young sisters for having been too liberal in their distribution of relief,

not knowing how to refuse any body, and leaving nothing for the morrow, she would take their place and distribute it herself; but before the middle of the day there would be nothing left. When it was pointed out to her that she was not more economical than her sisters, she always found some excellent excuse for her prodigality, adding, "If nothing comes for distribution to-morrow, we must sell our chairs." They would not have brought in much; but something always came before the evening.

Her affection for the poor was mingled with reverence. She had great faith in the virtue of their prayers. She believed them to be all-powerful with God; and when any one brought her alms, or did some good work at her desire, she would say, "My sick and my poor shall pray for you."

But to none did the deep tenderness of her heart flow forth as to her sisters.

Her love for the Sœur Tardy, who was her superioress when she first came to the Faubourg St. Marceau, was so intense that she could hardly bear the separation when her beloved mother was removed to the Hospice des Ménages. Every thing that had belonged to her was sacred in her eyes.

The new superioress, in her desire to restrain this vehement attachment, removed every thing that could remind her of the Sœur Tardy. The poor Sœur Rosalie was in despair, she had not yet been taught perfect resignation by age and habit, and contrived to get possession of a shoe, which she carefully concealed under her bed.

When she was herself placed at the head of the little community, she turned the whole power of her affection upon her daughters; she was truly their mother. Those who came as postulants were treated as little children, whose weakness must be considered and their tottering steps supported. They were

gently trained to the virtues of their holy profession, to the love of obedience and self-sacrifice. As they advanced in their apprenticeship, the work became harder, the life more austere. Nothing was spared to test their vocation, and to show them the painful side of the life they had embraced. She taught them above all to love the poor.

"Love them," she said, "if you would have them love you; and if you have nothing else to give them, give yourselves."

If a sister fell sick, or was even seriously indisposed, she became anxious at once; and severe and mortified as she was in her own life, she forbade all exertion or fatigue. If the illness grew serious, she spent all her free time by the invalid's bed-side. At the first appearance of danger, she watched the progress of the malady with inexpressible anxiety, and met it by all the resources of skill and affection. Her heart was so torn with grief, that the physicians concealed the truth from her, as they would do from a mother. She was inconsolable when God called any of her children to Himself. At the mention of her name, or the remembrance of one of her words or actions, she would melt into tears. The removal of one of her daughters to another house was a matter of real distress to her. The sisters always discovered that such a change was in contemplation by the depression of their mother. She was always in dread of their being taken from her.

"Don't go," she said once to the Sœur Mélanie, when there was a ceremonial at the mother-house; "you are tall, you will be noticed and sent upon some new mission."

She felt a great scruple about this strong affection for her sisters, and sometimes accused herself of it as of a great weakness. Who would have wished to cure her of it? She one day asked pardon of a

priest, who was one of her most valued friends, for the scandal she had given the day before by manifesting excessive grief at the departure of one of her sisters.

"Be at peace, mother," replied he; "if you did not love your sisters thus, you would not love your poor so much."

And how fully did the young sisters appreciate the blessing of her direction! How intensely was she loved, how deeply lamented! When her daughters knelt weeping around the bed on which she lay dead, and thought of all the saintliness of her life, one single fear alone prompted them to pray for her soul. "Perhaps," said one of them, "she may have something to suffer, to expiate her too great love for us."

But she was most strict in any thing which related to their duty, or their advancement in perfection. She required the most exact fulfilment of the rule, having ever in mind those words of St. Vincent, "On your fidelity to your rule depends perhaps the salvation of tens of thousands, of husbands restored to their wives, parents to their children, who but for you would have perished for ever."

She never allowed any affectation or constraint of manner; and cured their awkwardness or excess of timidity by obliging them to see and converse with strangers; and if one of them seemed to shrink from going before the officials charged with the relief of the poor, she would say:

"What are you afraid of? do you not speak in the name of God?"

She warned them continually against desiring to be distinguished or remarked in their works of charity.

"Be like pure water," she said, "which flows on continually without colour or taste."

The slightest negligence, the least infraction of rule, was invariably reproved; and though her reprimands were given with great sweetness, there was something so awful in the sweetness that the sisters dared not look her in the face. When one of them obeyed, indeed, but without cheerfulness and alacrity, she said, "My child, our Lord will not be pleased with you to-day; I see it in your face."

When another showed a little impatience in her movements, she called her back, saying, "Your good angel, my child, cannot follow you at that rate;" and the work, which had been begun with too much precipitation, was recommenced with a prayer.

Another was somewhat tardy in beginning to write a letter for a poor man:

"Come, my child," said the Sœur Rosalie, "your guardian-angel is holding the pen for you; you must not keep him waiting."

She did not spare them in the service of the poor. They would often come in weary from a long expedition, having mounted many a long staircase and visited many a poor family; but if another case presented itself, calling for immediate relief, the superior did not hesitate to send them out again immediately, giving them hardly time to take their dinner.

"You will go, my child," said she, "will you not, and take your recreation with our Lord? you will find Him with that poor sick man." One of the sisters, who held the office of portress, complained of the time wasted in waiting for the poor people to cross the court before they would say what they wanted.

"When you open the door, my child," replied the Sœur Rosalie, "make an act of faith in the presence of God in the poor man to whom you open it, and you will not complain of the length of time he spends in the court or the house."

She taught her daughters a detachment from all the things of this world, of which her own life was a continual example ; but there was one sacrifice which she could never bring herself to require of them. She allowed them to write to their families as often as they asked permission to do so ; and when one of them, soon after her arrival, expressed her gratitude for this, "Rest assured," replied she, "that this correspondence will not injure your perfection ; it is not for us to impose sacrifices on our parents when they wish to hear from us ; and when we write often, we are less engrossed by it than when we write very seldom."

She wrote often to her own mother ; though, from the fear of neglecting her poor, she never went to see her. When she grew blind, she was much grieved that she could no longer use her pen ; she felt sad at the beginning of her last year on earth, because it was the first New Year's Day since her departure from home that she had passed without sending a letter to her mother.

She had a filial affection for her order and her superiors, especially for the Superior-General, whose lightest word she was always prompt and eager to obey.

But her affection was not confined to her poor, her kindred, and her sisters ; she had friends in all ranks, and she loved them with all her heart. She never lost sight of those whom she had once honoured with her friendship ; she took interest in the minutest incident of their life,—however busy, she had always time for them. She loved to talk with them of her own subjects of interest as well as theirs, and would ask advice of them with the simplicity of a child. As she made it her delight to serve them, she reckoned upon their aid in return, and never hesitated to ask it.

She wanted on one occasion to get a man who was in danger quietly out of Paris.

"You want a servant, do you not?" said she to one of her friends, who was about to set out on a journey.

"Not at this moment, mother."

"O yes, this very day you want one, in order to do me a service."

She wrote to another :

"Pray do not think to get to heaven until you have placed out my two orphans ; it will weigh upon your conscience, and keep you at the door until the end of time. So place out my two children quickly, for I can keep them no longer."

There was a delicacy, a warmth, a confiding trust in her friendship, which those who enjoyed it can never forget. They went when they were happy to the little house of the Epée-de-Bois, to find a heart sure to share their joy and to teach them how to welcome it. In days of sorrow and depression they went there more eagerly still ; for there they were sure of finding tears to mingle with theirs, and words to rouse their fainting courage.

In 1854, the Père de Ravignan was attacked by what was believed to be a fatal illness. The church in France was praying in anguish for the life of her missionary. The Sœur Rosalie remembered that a life precious to the Church had more than once been redeemed by the sacrifice of another, and without hesitation she offered hers for that of the Père de Ravignan.

"He has done, and is destined to do, so much good," said she to her sisters, "and I have done so little, that I should be wanting in charity were I not to offer myself in his place. I hope that the Lord will accept me."

The Lord did not accept her then. He restored

the life of His holy and eloquent servant without requiring so great a price for it, and she was left to act and suffer yet awhile on earth.

The humility of the Sœur Rosalie was equal to her charity. When told that a person had been speaking well of her, she replied, "He is very wrong to say it, and still more to think it."

When she received a most insulting letter from a man whose bad conduct was the misery of an honourable family to which she was strongly attached, she said, "He knows me very well; it is just like me,—it is my very picture."

She could not bear the poor to call her their benefactress. "Call me your friend, your sister, your servant if you will, for that is what I am."

Her thirst for humiliation and insult always led her to do the most good to those who treated her worst. One day, having come to the end of her resources, she was obliged to refuse the relief which one of the sisters asked for a poor woman. "Well, my mother," said the sister, who knew her well, "since you will not give this poor woman ten francs, I will set her to speak ill of you, and you will give her twenty."

She could not endure that any of her good works should be known and talked of. "One single grain of self-love," said she, "is enough to spoil any good work."

If obliged to allude to any of her acts of charity, she continued to set it down to the account of the curé of the parish, of her friends, or her sisters, of any body but herself.

"It would be very difficult to write her life," said one of her sisters; "for she took care to put every thing out of sight which could point out or keep in mind any of her good works."

When she went to any of the charitable meet-

ings, at which her presence was continually required, she kept always in the background, never spoke till she was urged to do so, and then gave her opinion with remarkable clearness, but with such gentleness and modesty that she seemed to be rather asking advice than giving it. She could not at all understand why people came so continually to ask her advice. "What a strange fancy all these people have for consulting me; one would think they had lost their senses!"

Some one remarked to her one day, when speaking of her influence over her neighbourhood, that it would be very difficult to replace her. "What do you mean?" said she; "I am a bad pane of glass; when broken, it will be replaced by one stronger and better."

About a year before her death, having passed a sleepless night, she employed it, as she told a good priest who came to visit her, in examining her past life. "Illness and sleeplessness are good for me," she said; "for they give me time to look into myself, and to see how useless my life has been. I do not know how it is that God has been pleased to make use of me, or how I ever became a Sister of Charity. In my youth little was known in my country of the daughters of St. Vincent de Paul. We thought only of the daughters of St. Francis of Sales, so St. Vincent played a trick upon St. Francis when he called me to his community; but he gained little by it, for he got a very good-for-nothing subject."

"What a folly it is," she often said, "to take credit to ourselves for the success of any of our undertakings, when we owe it to the prayer of some poor man; or the intervention of some unknown friend!"

She considered herself responsible for all the evil which went on around her. "See," she would say,

“the consequences of my neglect; God will hold me accountable for all these faults, and for all these sufferings. O God, when wilt Thou give these poor people a better and more devoted servant, that Thou mayest be no longer hindered from pouring Thy blessings upon them?” And if any undertaking failed, “How can you wonder at it?” she said; “I had to do with it, and have caused its ill-success.”

She had a great dislike to the practice of beatifying the living. Her friends had been one day insisting upon her claims to a place in Heaven, which she refuted with even more than usual animation; she could not, however, help smiling when the Sœur Mélanie, one of the oldest of her companions, cut the discussion short by these words: “Well, mother, perhaps you may be right; but when our Lord sees you, He will say, ‘Here is an old servant who has been in the house for fifty years; she must not be left out.’”

But the conviction of her unworthiness never degenerated into despondency; she drew from that very conviction a motive for implicit reliance on the Divine mercy. A remarkable dream, which she once related to her sisters, expresses at once her humility and her faith in the omnipotence of charity.

“One night,” said she, “I dreamt that I was standing before the judgment-seat of God. He looked at me with great severity; and was just going to pronounce my condemnation, when I was suddenly surrounded by a crowd of people carrying old shoes, hats, and caps. They presented them to our Lord, saying, ‘It was she who gave us all these.’ Then Jesus Christ turned to me and said, ‘In return for all these trifles, given in My Name, I give you the kingdom of Heaven,—take possession of it for all eternity.’”

To the self-contempt in which she was so well

grounded, she joined that perfect resignation to the Divine Will which is the best security against despair.

“To avoid falling,” said she, “we must lean on these two supports, trust in God and distrust of self; and then, when we have fallen, we must do like little children who tumble down—cry, look at their mother, and then get up again comforted.”

Like her holy patron, she always recommended her children never to outrun Divine Providence; to walk neither quicker nor slower than God; and she summed up the duties of a Christian in these words:

“We should have the heart of a child towards God, of a mother towards our neighbour, and of a judge towards ourselves.”

The extreme humility of the Sœur Rosalie shrank from every thing out of the common path. She admired the missionary, who seeks the martyr's crown amid savage tribes; she venerated those among the sisters who asked to be sent on the mission of charity to Africa or America or the hospitals of the East; but she aspired not to these glorious sacrifices. The sick and the infidels of her own faubourg sufficed her; her ambition was to live and die obscurely among her own people; her perfection, to do her every-day duties to the best of her power; her favourite precept, “Let us be extraordinary by dint of being ordinary.”

She wished great simplicity to pervade all the arrangements of the schools; and when the sisters asked for expensive improvements, she scolded them. “We must economise the public money,” said she, “and never forget that our first sisters kept school in a stable.”

Dearly as she loved her order, she dreaded for it the place which it has deservedly attained in the world's esteem, and the fame of the good works

which were heralded forth in journals and official reports.

"The Sisters of Charity," said she, "will soon be sticking feathers into their caps. A poor Carmelite, unknown in her cell, is often greater in the eyes of God, and of more use to the Church, than she whose merits and good works are so much extolled by the world."

Her piety was as calm and serious as it was ardent.

"I was brought up," she would say, "in the fear of God, and not, like many people in these days, in orange-flower-water devotion."

Holy Communion was her nourishment. She had such a hunger for it, that when ill and unable to sit up, she would rise with great difficulty, drag herself to the holy table, and then return to her bed happy in the possession of her Saviour. Her day was passed in the continual presence of God. Her manifold occupations often prevented her giving much time to meditation and prayer; but if she were left alone for an instant, the sisters would find her on their return on her knees, and absorbed in prayer; and she congratulated herself on her many sleepless nights, because God thus gave her time to pray.

In the midst of crowds, in her walks, and on her visits, her heart was always praying; every thing around her became the subject of pious meditation and reflection. She said one day to a sister whom she was sending out, "I never pray so well as in the street. The passers-by are no more to me than the trees in a forest. I agree with that saint who compared the world to a great wood, where the soul must not allow itself to be caught or distracted by the briers or brushwood."

The sisters had been hindered one day, by an

unusual quantity of washing, from giving the usual time to prayer.

"You may make your meditation here," said the superioress, "without leaving your work. Think that your souls should be as white as these soap-suds, and as light as they to mount up to God; and that you will never bring your consciences to the whiteness and purity of this linen but by cleansing them in the waters of penance."

The *Imitation of Jesus Christ* and the works of her dear countryman, as she called him, St. Francis of Sales, were her favourite books; but especially did she imbue her mind with the life and thoughts of St. Vincent de Paul. She meditated upon them day and night, sought to model her life upon his, and had some of his maxims continually upon her lips. She knelt every evening to say her prayers before a picture representing the saint carried to heaven by angels, which was a precious memorial of the Sœur Tardy. She made her examination of conscience before this picture; and when she thought she had reason to reproach herself with somewhat of quickness to a tiresome visitor or importunate beggar, she would say to the sisters, "St. Vincent looked sad at me to-night; he is not pleased with me." And she would spend part of the night in trying to make him amends.

She had a particular devotion to St. Joseph, whom she continually invoked, and whose hidden and interior life especially attracted her. She loved also to invoke our Blessed Lady under the name of Notre Dame de l'Espérance, and went on important occasions to pray before the altar in the Church of St. Severin which is dedicated to her under that title. But her piety, like all her other virtues, was free from the slightest exaggeration or peculiarity. She was very anxious to check among the younger

sisters the least tendency to eccentricity, or to the ambition which would outrun the grace of God. She was a great enemy to scrupulosity, which she always represented as an offence against the goodness of God.

One of her friends alleged, as an excuse for not going to visit the poor, that she was going to venerate the holy robe at Argenteuil.

"Why go to-day to see that relic of our Lord at the expense of your poor," replied she, "when you have with you always the most precious of all relics, His Body and Blood in the Sacrament of the Altar?"

Her life was in exact conformity with the teaching of St. Francis of Sales. Its exterior was sweet and amiable; its interior severe. Her serene and even cheerfulness concealed the most entire detachment and the most austere mortification. When she died, nothing could be found to give as a memorial of her; she had deprived herself of every thing. When any thing was given to her which she could not possibly refuse, she sought out some one immediately to whom it might give pleasure.

In the severe winter of 1829-30, a poor woman came to ask alms with nothing to cover her but a thin gown, which would not keep out the cold. The Sœur Rosalie looked in vain for any thing to cover her; the presses were all empty. She begged the poor woman to wait a moment; and soon returned with a parcel, which she charged her to let nobody see as she left the house. It was her own petticoat, which she had just taken off. She continued her employment without a word upon the subject; for she had already been scolded by her daughters more than once on similar occasions; and they only discovered it now by seeing her tremble with cold as she stood in the middle of the court. They began to remonstrate; but she silenced them, saying,

"Be quiet, my children; I have clothed the

Blessed Virgin, who was all shivering with cold. We at least are well clothed, and can light a fire when we need it; but who could help pitying this poor woman?"

She ate little and quickly, sacrificing her dinner to the first person who asked to speak to her; so that, to give her time to eat, the sisters used to avoid telling her of the visitors who were waiting. She complained of this attention to her comfort, or rather her health.

"A tradesman," said she, "rises from table for the sake of the most insignificant profit. Are we not labouring for something better, and can we consult our ease?"

During the later years of her life, and especially after she grew blind, the sisters used to try to get her to take something better than the ordinary fare; but she would never consent to this, and used to say in distress,

"Why do you give these things to me? They would have done good to the sick woman you visited to-day. Is not a potato good enough for the servant of the poor?"

Notwithstanding her frequent maladies, she was the first in the house in the exact observance of the rule. Many a time did her daughters, when they saw her at night overpowered with fatigue, beg her on their knees to take a few hours' additional rest in the morning; but all in vain, at four o'clock she was always up.

"One day," said she, in answer to all their entreaties, "I shall be glad that I have followed the rule exactly. And consider how much easier it is for me than for many of our sisters who are watching by the sick while I am still in bed."

Her nature was so vivid and impetuous, that the attainment of the perfection to which she arrived in

all these virtues had required the unremitting and vigorous exercise of her will. In her childhood the slightest opposition irritated her to the highest degree; she could not endure to be contradicted; a word or a gesture which displeased her was enough to excite a storm in her heart. By dint of prayer and continual struggles she so tamed this impetuosity of nature that it manifested itself only in her fervent zeal for doing good. Amid the daily contradictions and the harassing occupations in which her life was passed, she preserved a perfect evenness both of mind and temper.

Her patience under suffering grew to be truly angelic. She was subjected to the most wearisome treatment in order to cure her blindness. Water was applied to her eyes every five minutes. When the sisters who nursed her expressed their wonder at her patience, "How can I be impatient," said she, "when you all give me such an example of patience in your care of me?" She loved to see her sisters bright, and smiled at their merriment; but she had a great weight of sadness always at her heart. Nothing could divert her thoughts from the moral and physical sufferings of the poor.

"How can you expect me to be merry," said she, "when so many people are weeping round me?"

She suffered much also in all the afflictions of the Church, and the insults and ingratitude offered to Almighty God in return for all His mercies; while, on the other hand, her heart expanded with joy on hearing of any virtuous action, and she rejoiced in every work of charity which came to her knowledge.

She carried her self-denial to such a degree as to forbid herself the slightest relaxation, and would have reproached herself had she spent a single moment in any thing but the fulfilment of her duties.

One day, however, she declared that she would

make an excursion into the country. This journey was to go down the staircase which led into the garden of the Maison de Secours, and to gather a dozen pears from a magnificent tree which was the pride of the garden. She had been planning this excursion for some weeks past, but had never found time for it. At last one of the sisters, taking advantage of a free moment, seized her hand and dragged her towards the garden. She was already on the staircase when the bell rang: "I will go to the door," said her companion; "go on, dear mother, and I will come to you in a moment."

"No, no," replied the Sœur Rosalie, turning back, "our Lord calls me; He will not have me quit His service for a moment." And she gave up her country-excursion for ever.

As to the secular life and the worldly visits with which she was sometimes laughingly reproached, she accepted them as a mortification for the good of her poor, and also for the good of those whom she thus received; knowing how beneficial it was for them to breathe the air of poverty and misery, if only for a moment. The length of her audiences was measured by the occasion of the visit. Those who brought her good news and a light heart were soon dismissed. Those who came in sadness were heard with unwearied patience, however long and tiresome might be the tales they had to tell. When the sisters once complained of a man who spent hours in telling her his troubles, she said:

"If you were in trouble, would not you like to be consoled? Not that I did console him; but I listened to the tale of his sorrows, and that is always a comfort to the afflicted."

She never showed the least impatience even with the most useless conversations, although nothing wearied her so much; only sometimes, when her guest

wandered into interminable details, she would say a decade of her Rosary while she listened to him.

Whenever she had a moment's leisure, she employed herself in the lowliest offices of the house,—sweeping the court, the staircases, &c.,—with so much zeal, that the sister whose office she was taking would cry out to her companions, “Pray send some poor people to our mother at once, or she will do all the work of the house.”

The intellect of the Sœur Rosalie was as richly endowed as her soul. She possessed in an eminent degree the gifts of originality, perseverance, and order. No house was ever better ordered than hers. She spent a part of the night in arranging the work for the morrow, and in the morning, after breakfast, she allotted to each sister her part. She would dictate three letters at once in a style which was simple, precise, and directly to the point,—the expression of a mind which acts more than it speaks, containing much in few words. Intrusted as she was with the ideas and interests of so many persons, charged with affairs of such various kinds, she gave to each its due place and importance, forgetting nothing and confusing nothing; she transacted each in its own time as if she had nothing else to think of, and succeeded in accomplishing all.

The secret spring of the genius and the holiness of the Sœur Rosalie is to be found in the clear vision of her faith. Through the realities of earth she beheld the truths of heaven; in the midst of her perpetual intercourse with human kind she was never separate from God, His angels, and His saints. While external occupations seemed to shut her out from the interior life, her soul was in perpetual communion with the Divine Will, with the sufferings of her Redeemer, with the prayers and merits of the heavenly Court; and from that communion she de-

rived strength to overcome herself, devotion to the service of her neighbour, the love of mortification, and detachment from the things of earth.

After the operation of removing the cataract, she was obliged to remain in a sitting posture for a long time without moving. In order to relieve her from the constraint of this position, one of the sisters wished to place a pillow behind her head; but she would not allow it.

“When I think that I am in the presence of God, and have my good angel beside me, I am ashamed,” said she, “to give way to such weakness.”

This perpetual union with God impressed such a character of saintliness upon her commonest actions, that the sisters would often stand silently looking at her, till, in surprise at their fixed gaze, she would ask what was the matter. They took care not to tell her their thoughts; but would say one to another when they were alone, “Must not our dear Lady in the house of St. John have been just like our mother?”

CHAPTER VIII.

ILLNESS AND DEATH OF THE SŒUR ROSALIE.

DURING her fifty years' devotion to the Faubourg St. Marceau, the Sœur Rosalie had been often visited by sickness. She seldom passed a day without suffering from severe palpitations of the heart; and she was confined to her room for several months almost every year by a tertian fever, which often seriously endangered her life. She generally retarded her convalescence by her eagerness to return to the service of her poor; but her strong constitution carried her through all these attacks; and after these interruptions, which she used as a retreat for her soul, she

came forth as zealous and active as ever. The weight of years even, as they accumulated upon her head, deprived her of no portion either of her strength or courage.

In her fear of the last judgment, she had often expressed a wish to have three months granted to her to prepare for death. This wish was fulfilled in the way to sanctify her most perfectly, by requiring from her the most painful sacrifice. She became blind. She was called upon to forego the sight of her poor, her friends, her children, of all on which her eyes had so much loved to rest. To that parlour, to which she had been accustomed to carry consolation and hope, she was now to be led by a sister, to feel with an uncertain hand for her wonted seat, and never to stir from it; while those to whom she had been used to give a bright and affectionate welcome, had to wait till their name was mentioned and they were led up to her.

She felt her affliction keenly, especially the trial of becoming useless and, as she said, a trouble to others; but there was no shade of despondency or discontent in her sorrow; it in no way disturbed the even calmness of her spirit. Some of her friends asked her permission to make a novena to St. Germaine for her cure.

"Do nothing of the kind," said she; "I should fear to be chosen by God for the subject of a miracle, I should think He was going to demand something extraordinary of me; and besides, people would be thinking that I had done something to deserve it."

She was persuaded at last to give her consent, but refused to take part in the novena.

"I like better to leave it all to the will of God; and besides, I should spoil your prayers by mixing mine with them."

In her darkened state she still faithfully dis-

charged all the duties of which she was still capable, and pointed out to her daughters what she could no longer do herself. When friends came to see her, she made them sit beside her, gazed upon them with the eyes of her heart, till they forgot in the vivacity of her conversation, the freshness of her ideas, and the unfailing interest with which she listened to all that interested them, the infirmity which had shut her out from the external world.

Though she lamented her incapacity to do any thing for her poor, she never ceased to think of them. The very day on which the last fever attacked her, she was tormented by the thought that, perhaps for the first time, she had forgotten a petition made to her the day before.

She spoke of it the first thing in the morning, and begged one of the sisters to supply what she had omitted.

“Pray,” said she, “before you do any thing else, take a blanket to that poor man; he must be very cold, for even I am shivering in my bed.”

She was, in fact, shivering from fever. This was her last work of charity.

In October 1855, she underwent the operation for the cataract, which was only partially successful. Her general health, however, improved so much, that sanguine expectations were indulged as to the result of a second operation, which was fixed for the beginning of the spring of 1856; but on the night of the 4th of February she was attacked by a severe cold, accompanied by fever and acute pain in the side. She would not disturb the sleep of the sister who was near her; but the physician was sent for in the morning, and pronounced the illness to be a severe attack of pleurisy. For the space of two days the malady seemed to be kept under by the powerful remedies applied. The sisters were not alarmed;

the invalid herself preserved her usual calmness, spoke of the slowness and weariness of convalescence, and said, "the poor are not so well off as I am."

She was anxious, as usual, on account of the fatigue of the sisters. One of them, who had sat up with her the first night, rose in the middle of the second to see how she was. She silently offered her something to drink; but the Sœur Rosalie recognised her, and said :

"My child, you do me a great deal of harm; you wear me by wearing out yourself."

She united all her sufferings to those of our divine Lord, and, greatly as she disliked remedies, took all that were brought to her, in remembrance of the bitter draught offered to Him in His passion.

The sister who came to dress a blister which had been applied to her found that the linen which had been laid upon it had got out of its place and become doubled together, so as to chafe the wound till it was covered with blood. Astonished to hear no complaint, nor to see any expression of suffering upon the calm face of the invalid, she dreaded the beginning of paralysis, and asked anxiously, "Dear mother, did you not feel any pain?" As she received no answer, she repeated her question, when the Sœur Rosalie answered with a sweet smile, "Yes, I felt it; but it was a nail of our dear Lord's cross, and I wished to keep it."

The thought of death had never been strange to her; she did not desire, nay in some sense she feared it. In the course of the preceding year she had watched by the dying bed of the Mother Seraphine Fournier, the superioress of the Visitation, who loved her much, and wished her to be present at her death, in order, as she said, to have an angel by her. In her last farewell, this holy nun, who has left behind her the reputation of a saint, said to her :

“Courage, dear sister, you will soon follow me.”

These words struck her forcibly; she repeated them to her sisters, adding:

“I know not why this good mother spoke to me thus; if God pleases to leave me a few years longer on earth, I do not ask to quit it.”

During this short illness, the thought of death did not appear to present itself to her mind; there seemed no reason to anticipate it. On the morning of the 6th February, the worst symptoms seemed to have disappeared; and the malady was supposed to be subdued. At eleven o'clock she took some broth; her daughters were already congratulating themselves on her recovery, when, at one o'clock, the pulse rose and the violent pain in the side returned. The Sœur Rosalie continued for some time speaking of the wants of her poor, and gave some directions as to the duties of the day, when suddenly her head began to wander, and the meaning of her words was lost. A stupor soon came on, interrupted occasionally by incoherent words, which was the forerunner of death. The desolate hearts of the sisters felt that all hope was gone; and they sent in haste for the curé of St. Medard, who could only give extreme unction and recite the last prayers. The Sœur Rosalie made the sign of the cross, murmured two or three unintelligible words, which sounded like the echo of some inward prayer, and relapsed into lethargy. On the morrow, at eleven o'clock, she died without agitation, without agony, as if she had passed from a light slumber to a deeper rest.

The tidings of her death soon spread through Paris; and then was it seen what a life had just passed away from earth. Men of all classes and conditions, from the most remote parts of Paris, who could not have been supposed to know even the name of the Sœur Rosalie, stood still in the streets

and wept when they heard that she was dead, and replied to those who asked them why:

“O, we owe her so much; she has done us so much good.”

Her sisters wept and prayed around her funeral-bed. Friends who had hardly heard of her illness, some who knew not of it at all, were met on the threshold, where they came as usual for a moment of joy and consolation, by the tidings of her death.

On the following day her corpse was exposed to view in a *chapelle ardente*, dressed in the habit of a Sister of Charity, her rosary on her arm, and the crucifix in the crossed hands which rested on her breast. Her features had resumed their habitual expression; her face was beautiful in its calm serenity: death had but added that indescribable majesty which it is wont to give to those whose lives have been like hers. As soon as the gates were opened, a long procession flowed in, which only ceased at night, to begin again on the following morning. The whole Faubourg St. Marceau poured itself out upon the well-known house. Workmen left their labour to swell the train. Mothers led their little children; the aged and the sick were carried to look once more upon the face which had been the sunshine of their lot, and to thank her by their prayers. They embraced her feet and her hands, and brought books, rosaries, or handkerchiefs to touch her body; or eagerly carried off with them something which she had used, to serve as a relic and be a blessing and a safeguard to their homes.

A religious silence pervaded that whole neighbourhood, which is wont to be so noisy; there was but one thought in the hearts of all,—to pay homage to her; and not one of all the crowd which came to the house during those two days asked an alms of the sisters.

A number of persons from all parts of Paris made the same pilgrimage to the Rue l'Epée-de-Bois, and with the same reverence and affection. Priests of every parish, religious of every order, asked leave to say Mass in the *chapelle ardente*; venerable prelates mingled in the crowd to bless her remains. Cardinal Bonald came to pray beside them; and the Archbishop of Rouen, one of her oldest and most beloved friends, laid his pectoral cross on her body as on the relics of a saint.

Her funeral-day was one of those which can never be forgotten. The procession left the house at about eleven o'clock. The clergy of St. Medard, accompanied by a great number of ecclesiastics, walked first, preceded by the cross; then came the school-children and the young girls of the *Patronage*; the Sisters of Charity surrounded the coffin, which was carried on the bier of the poor, as the Sœur Rosalie had always desired, that St. Vincent might know her for his daughter to the last. Then followed the authorities of the municipality and the *bureau de bienfaisance*; and after them a multitude, which could neither be numbered nor described, of every rank, age, and profession,—a whole people, with its great and small, its rich and poor, its learned men and its lowest artisans, all mixed and confused together, and expressing, each in his different way, the same sorrow and the same admiration.

Instead of taking the direct road to the church, the procession made a circuit through the quarter which used to be called her diocese, as if to bid a last farewell to the faubourg she had loved so much. As it passed along, the women and little children, and all who had not been able to join the train, bowed reverently, making the sign of the cross and murmuring a prayer. The Mass was said by the curé of St. Medard, and the vicar-general of the Arch-

bishop was present to represent him. The catafalque was surrounded by a picquet of soldiers, to render military honours to the cross of the Legion of Honour which lay upon the coffin of the Sœur Rosalie. It was not hers; the sisters, in reverence for her humility, had shrunk from placing it there; but one of the administrators of the *bureau de bienfaisance* had fastened his cross to the mortuary cloth, with the thought that hereafter it would confer a double honour upon the wearer.

After the service the procession passed on to the cemetery of the Mont Parnasse. A grave had been opened in the part allotted to the Sisters of Charity. The body of the Sœur Rosalie was lowered into it, the last prayers were recited, the coffin covered with a little earth, and a wooden cross placed over the grave. After the last benediction, the mayor of the *douzième arrondissement* pronounced a few touching words, which seemed to express the feeling of all present; some young girls hung garlands of everlasting flowers upon the cross; then all returned in silence to the sorrows and the distractions of life, and soon, of all that crowd, there remained but two or three poor women, who prayed there till nightfall, leaning upon the railing of the sisters' burial-place.

A few months afterwards some of the Sœur Rosalie's friends, desiring that the place where her body reposes should never be forgotten, removed it to one of the extremities of the cemetery, close to the grille which separates the sisters' portion from the rest, so that it might be easily found by those who should come there to pray. A stone was placed over the grave, surmounted by a large cross, with this inscription:

“ TO SŒUR ROSALIE,

FROM

HER GRATEFUL FRIENDS THE RICH AND THE POOR.”

On the evening of the day on which the Sœur Rosalie fell sick, her mother expired without illness or pain, at the age of eighty-eight. After having brought up all her children in the fear of God and the love of His law, she had dedicated many long years to prayer and meditation. Surrounded by the loving and reverent affection of her children, and the respect of all her neighbours, to whom she was ever a living and edifying example, she had preserved the clearness of her intellect and the vigour of her mind to extreme old age.

Her eldest daughter's presence was the only thing wanting to her perfect contentment. She had gone to Paris in 1814 to spend some weeks with her, and she was always urging her to pay her a visit in return. The constant reply of the Sœur Rosalie was, that she would come immediately if she could bring all her children with her. Her mother never gave up the hope of seeing her till she heard that she had become blind.

The sisters of the Rue l'Epée-de-Bois had sent Madame Rendu a very striking likeness of the Sœur Rosalie. They persuaded her to sit for it by representing to her that if she sacrificed the pleasure which her mother would have enjoyed in seeing her to her poor, she owed her at least the consolation of looking at her picture.

Madame Rendu kept this portrait continually before her eyes. She was happy in the virtues of her daughter, and proud of her sanctity; and she wept with joy whenever any inhabitant of Gex came back from Paris full of the kind reception he had met with from the superiress of the Rue l'Epée-de-Bois, of the good works he had witnessed, and the blessings he had heard poured out upon her head.

On the 2d February, although nothing betokened that her end was approaching, Madame Rendu asked

to receive the last Sacraments. She said to the curé of the parish, "To-morrow you celebrate the Feast of St. Francis of Sales; it will be the day of my death." On the next day she assembled her family around her, bade them farewell with perfect calmness, spoke of her last hour as of an event for which she had long been prepared, and slept sweetly in the Lord, with the name of the Sœur Rosalie on her lips.

The news of her death reached Paris on the day of her daughter's funeral. God called them both together to Himself, that neither might have the pain of surviving the other.

There was many a desolate heart left behind among those whom the Sœur Rosalie had helped and comforted; the void is, of course, most painfully felt among her sisters. They cannot, even yet, accustom themselves to do without their mother; they can neither leave the house, as one of them said, nor come back to it. The Sœur Rosalie is with them in all their works; in every thing they undertake, they ask themselves continually how she would have done it, and work under her beloved eye, and with a constant reference to her.

| One of them was soon to join her.

The Sœur Mélanie had been five-and-twenty years with her mother. She was tall, strong, and energetic; so that she was always in request for every work which called for physical strength and courage. In the insurrection of 1830, she received a ball in her bonnet, while stooping down to raise a wounded man. She was close to the superioress when the officer was saved; and replied to the insurgents, who tried to intimidate her, "I fear nothing but God."

She always watched over her mother in her long illnesses; and reproached herself bitterly for not having awaked on the night when she was last taken ill.

She was inconsolable for her loss; and her name and virtues were continually on her lips.

"I am a poor ignorant creature," she would say to those who came to ask her for some particulars of the years they had spent together; "for the first time in my life, I regret my want of intelligence, for it unfits me for giving an adequate idea of our holy mother."

A little while afterwards, she went to make a retreat at the mother-house. The typhus and the cholera were raging in the hospitals of Constantinople; the sisters were death-struck at the bed-side of the dying soldiers. The first detachment had been already decimated. The superioress-general assembled the sisters on the last day of the retreat; she asked for fifteen, to replace those whom death or illness had removed from the service of the sick. Forty-five presented themselves, among whom was the Sœur Mélanie. She was accepted, in compliance with her longing desire for death. Before her departure she went to pray at her mother's grave; and when her relations bade her farewell, she said to them, "I am going to heaven by the shortest road—by way of Constantinople."

In the course of a few weeks, letters from Scutari announced the death of Mdlle. Esparbier, of Thoulouse, in religion the Sœur Mélanie, who died of typhus-fever, in the discharge of her charitable functions. The daughter was once more with her mother.

We have heard that a visitor who had been attracted from a distance by the fame of the Sœur Rosalie once paid a visit to the Rue l'Epée-de-Bois, in the hope of seeing something very extraordinary. He was received by the Sœur Rosalie, who spoke to him with her usual politeness and simplicity, and pursued her accustomed occupations in his presence. After some time, he asked to be introduced to the

superioress. On being told that he had just seen her, he exclaimed, "What! is the Sœur Rosalie nothing more than that?"

He had, in fact, seen nothing in her to distinguish her from others; and could not understand the apparent disproportion between the person and her reputation.

The history of the Sœur Rosalie may at first sight suggest a similar inquiry.

What do we see in that history? A poor Sister of Charity concealed in one of the least important positions of her order, at the head of a very small community in the most miserable part of Paris, who, during the lapse of fifty years, never left the Rue l'Epée-de-Bois, never founded any great work, left behind her nothing heroic or sublime—no distant mission, no service of the wounded under the fire of the enemy; only ordinary actions and every-day events,—a soldier saved in an insurrection, a father's pardon obtained by the prayers of his child, children received into the *crèche*, the school, or the orphanage, young workwomen protected, families relieved in their distress;—just what the Sisters of Charity are doing always and every where, and what seems to be within the reach of every charitable and Christian soul. And on the other hand, a world-wide reputation: power, wealth, and intellect crowding eagerly into a little convent-parlour, the reverential obedience of the people, the homage and visits of sovereigns during life, and after death a universal mourning, a funeral procession longer than follows warriors and monarchs to the grave, a name on all lips, and a memory in every heart.

The contrast is startling, and at first sight hard to solve; but let us look more deeply into the subject, and our surprise will turn into admiration.

The Sœur Rosalie had received from God quali-

ties which give power over the minds of men, which secure a high place in heaven and earth, which are the elements of superior minds and chosen souls. She was endowed with prudence and simplicity, lofty intelligence and goodness, innocence and genius; she was capable of governing men, of founding great institutions, and of leaving a great name behind her: she might have spent her life in doing great things.

She preferred the uniformity of an obscure life devoted to the habitual exercise of good works, recommencing every morning the work of the day before, never seeking to go out of the beaten path and the common way; so that it was impossible to distinguish which of her days had been the most useful, or which of her actions the most meritorious. In one word, she employed her genius and her virtue for fifty years in fulfilling with the greatest possible perfection the most ordinary duties of her holy vocation.

This constituted the merit, the usefulness, and the greatness of her life. Brilliant deeds and sublime sacrifices are the effort of a day, they carry with them their own stimulant and reward; in their very greatness the soul finds a lever which raises it, which sustains its strength and multiplies its energy; in every great action there is something of the excitement which urges the soldier to the attack, and often makes an ordinary man into a hero on the field of battle: wounds and death itself have an attraction under the form of glory or of martyrdom. The hidden devotion which renews its sacrifice at every hour and in the service of every person, which, silently and noiselessly, spends itself drop by drop in aid of human weakness and misery, requires a superior will and an assemblage of the most exalted virtues. ♀ It costs nature more, it does more for humanity.

To do the most ordinary things with the most extraordinary perfection, was the aim and end of the life of the Sœur Rosalie. It was the secret spring of the work which she achieved in herself and in others ; and without it her wonderful gifts, in the order of nature and of grace, would have been valueless to both.

We owe our rich harvests to the painful and common toil which continually turns up the earth : the humble lessons of the village-school do more for the regeneration of a people than the most eloquent teaching of its learned men ; and the Sœur Rosalie has cured more evils and saved more souls by her visits, her words, her alms of every-day occurrence, than by the brilliant deeds and heroic actions which her great intellectual and moral gifts would have enabled her to perform.

And the world itself acknowledged this truth when it came to seek her in her retreat, proffered her its veneration and its alms in exchange for her advice, her consolation, and her example, and surrounded her life and death with so many tokens of love and reverence. By a rare exception, men, who usually bestow their applause only on what is brilliant and renowned, in her admired silence and obscurity, honoured in her the humble discharge of lowly duties, and, judging as God Himself judges of His creatures, they for once preferred the perfection of a work to its brilliancy.

THE END.

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THE LIFE
OF
MDLLE. DE LAMOUROUS,

Commonly called "The Good Mother,"

**FOUNDRESS AND FIRST SUPERIORESS OF THE HOUSE
OF MERCY AT BORDEAUX.**



**BURNS AND LAMBERT, 17 PORTMAN STREET,
PORTMAN SQUARE.**

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THE LIFE OF MDLLE. DE LAMOUROUS.

CHAPTER I.

CHILDHOOD AND YOUTH OF THERÈSE DE LAMOUROUS. HER MOTHER'S DEATH.

IT was about the time when, at the age of sixteen, Jeanne Rendu* dedicated the early freshness of her youth to God and the poor among the daughters of St. Vincent, that Therèse de Lamourous first set her hand to the work for which she had been unconsciously preparing her soul by a novitiate of more than forty years; the first part of which had been passed in the peace of a holy and happy home, the last under the iron bondage of the Convention.

A striking resemblance may be traced between these two holy women. The character of both was essentially French in its elasticity, its clear practical common sense, and its unflagging energy; while endowed at the same time with a more than common measure of deep womanly tenderness. We may also observe a contrast. There was something brighter and more joyous in the spirit of the noble maiden, who had dwelt for thirty years in a happy home under the sunny sky of Gascony, than in that of the mountain

* Sœur Rosalie.

girl, who left her mother and country at sixteen to lay the sins and miseries of Paris like a burden upon her heart. Their vocations, too, were different; for Thérèse was no religious, not even in the wider sense in which that word includes the sisters of St. Vincent. The counsels of perfection, closely as she followed them, were still *counsels* to her; she never bound them upon her soul even by the bond of a temporary engagement, nor ever made any vow but those of her baptism. She stands before us as an example of what may be done for God by one whom He has called to labour for Him in the world, and who has faithfully laid the foundation of the work in her own soul.

The facts related here are taken from the life of Mdlle. de Lamourous by the Abbé Ponget, published in France in 1842.

Marie Thérèse Charlotte de Lamourous was born on All Saints' Day of the year 1754, at Barsac, a small town in the diocese of Bordeaux. Her parents—Louis Antoine de Lamourous and Elizabeth de Vincent—belonged to the provincial nobility of Gascony, and were distinguished for the fervent piety and high Christian character which marked so many of their class in the provinces, at a time when infidelity and selfish luxury had infected the great body of the aristocracy of France. Thérèse was baptised on the 4th of November, the Feast of St. Charles. The first eleven years of her life were spent in the country, under the watchful eye of her mother, who carefully cultivated the rich mental gifts with which she was endowed, and laid the foundation of that sanctity which was hereafter to bear such precious fruits.

From her very infancy Thérèse was taught to accept without murmuring the daily crosses of life. Kneeling before her crucifix, she was once heard to

say, "O my God, I promise to bear three crosses without crying; but if a fourth should come, I can't engage not to cry." And accordingly she used to bear her childish troubles very bravely till a fourth came, when she would retire quietly into a corner to cry. It was not long before the desire of voluntary mortification arose in the child's heart, young as she was; and she would rise in the night to pray, or to perform some penitential exercises, and contrive at her meals to deprive herself of the things she liked best. Like her great namesake and patroness, St. Teresa, she was very fond of making little hermitages for herself in her father's vineyard, in imitation of the Fathers of the Desert, in which she would spend much time in prayer.

When Therèse was about eleven years old, her family settled at Bordeaux, where she made her first communion. Her deep and tender devotion to Jesus in the Blessed Sacrament was the very keystone of her whole spiritual life. From the blessed day on which she first received Him, until the age of thirty, when her mother's death broke up the happy circle of her home, and the revolutionary storm which burst over her country called her to stern and unceasing trials, her life was calm and peaceful, like that passed under the roof of Nazareth by the side of Joseph and Mary.

Her love for her mother was singularly deep, and with all the dutiful reverence which belonged to filial affection under the old *régime*, combined something of the loving confidence of sisterly attachment. Nothing can be more engaging than the description given us of Mdlle. de Lamourous during the period when she thus gladdened her parents' house with her dutiful and gracious presence. Her manners were noble, modest, natural, and animated. She was highly accomplished; and

her mind had been cultivated in no common degree. She was well versed in Holy Scripture, and knew her religion well and accurately. She had that quickness of tact and instinctive common sense, which sometimes belong to genius, and sometimes serve to supply its place, but which are never wanting to those who are called upon to do great things for God or man. Therèse dearly loved the country, and understood country occupations well; she was accustomed also to assist her mother in household arrangements, and her love was ingenious in finding ways to spare that beloved parent all possible trouble and care. But dearly as she loved her, it was not with an engrossing affection; her warm bright spirit poured itself out upon all around her; and she had some young companions, children of valued friends of Madame de Lamourous, for whom she felt especial regard. Their mothers encouraged frequent meetings between the young people, which, in after years, Mdle. de Lamourous would describe in her lively natural way.

“Our mothers used to tell us to amuse ourselves to the best of our power; and we were not slow to follow their injunctions. We were very fond of dancing; and as we neither had nor desired to have any partners of the other sex, one of us used to tie a pink ribbon round her head to enact the part of a gentleman. No creatures could be merrier than we. Sometimes, in the midst of our fun, we would recollect that some of our prayers were yet unsaid, when we would break off and say them with the same hearty good-will with which we had been playing, and then come back with renewed spirit to our amusement. Sometimes, in the middle of a dance, I remembered that I was to go to communion next day; and this filled me with so much joy, that I danced with twice as much spirit as before.”

The simplicity of the character of Therèse, and its total freedom from eccentricity, was shown in the style of her dress so long as she was called upon to mix in the world. She would often, in later years, quote the advice given her upon this subject by her confessor, a holy discalced Carmelite friar, as the rule to be observed by all Christian gentlewomen. "Do not," said he, "be the first to adopt a new fashion, nor wait to do so till others have left it off. Let your dress be such as to attract as little notice as possible of any sort."

Thus, in the quiet happiness of home, never fully prized till we have passed out of its sunshine into the long shadows beyond, Therèse spent her youth, and came to the verge of middle life.

The revolutionary tempest was gathering in the distance as she reached her thirtieth year; but before it burst the gentle spirit of Madame de Lamourous was suffered to depart in peace. One only anxiety disturbed the close of her tranquil life. "Therèse," said she, "I have one great fear: I know how much you love me; I am so much afraid of what you will feel when I die; I am so much afraid you will not have strength to bear it." More full of the wish to comfort her mother than mindful of her own sufferings, Therèse replied, with surprising courage, "Never fear for me, mother; I shall have strength to bear it."

"You promise me not to give way to your grief, my child?"

"I promise you, my mother. Be comforted; strength will be given me."

Madame de Lamourous closed a holy life by a holy death, and Therèse kept her promise; but the struggle to overcome her grief nearly killed her. Her recovery from the state of prostration into which the effort threw her was considered almost miracu-

lous. She lay at first as if stunned; and then for some time wept so unceasingly, that the fountain of tears seemed to be dried up within her, and she was seldom seen to shed one again.

It seems to have been at this time that the hope arose within her heart that God was calling her to religion. She longed to devote herself to Him in the order of St. Teresa; but, on submitting her desires to the decision of her director, she was told that it was not thus that God would have her to glorify Him; and she submitted to the sentence with her usual unhesitating obedience. She had yet to wait through many a long and troubled year before she was called by the Divine Will to the work destined for her; a work beyond all others repugnant to her natural inclination.

CHAPTER II.

THE REIGN OF TERROR.

AT the time of her mother's death Therèse was left alone with her father; her only surviving brother being in America, her three sisters married. But instead of being a protector to his daughter in the terrible times which followed, the venerable old man was a continual source of most painful anxiety. He had fallen into a state of partial imbecility, though his bodily powers were unimpaired and the strength of his will unbroken. No entreaties of his daughter could moderate the indignation with which the fiery old nobleman regarded the men of the revolution, or restrain the expression of his feelings when some new insult to all that he held most sacred was brought to his ears. All that Therèse could do was to keep him

as much as possible out of the way of every thing likely to excite his wrath; and with this view, she persuaded him to retire with her from Bordeaux to a little hamlet about four leagues off called Le Pian, where he had a country-seat. They did not venture, however, to establish themselves in the family mansion, but found shelter in the shepherd's cottage, which, according to the custom of division and subdivision common at the time, belonged to Mdlle. herself.

It was a very lovely spot: the little cottage faced towards the south; a magnificent and very ancient oak stood by the entrance-door, shadowing a fountain of pure and sparkling water slightly tinged with iron, from which a little stream found its way through tangled woodlands to the blue waters of the Garonne.

The fountain still bears in the native *patois* of the country the name of "Mamizelle," after her who had knelt so often by its margin, beneath that broad shadowing oak, to pray, like the Maiden of Orleans, for France under a worse oppression than that from which she delivered it.

The cottage consisted of but four rooms, within the first of which was a closet which served as a chapel, where, when churches were desecrated and altars overthrown all around, the peasants gathered together from their scattered and solitary huts amid the vineyards of the Médoc, or on the wide moorlands of Gascony, to worship the God whom their infatuated country had disowned.

Madame de Lalanne, an intimate friend of Mdlle. de Lamourous and the foundress of an orphan asylum at Bordeaux, retired with her husband during the Reign of Terror to their country-house near Le Pian. There also was an oratory, where Mass was often secretly said and Sacraments administered by faithful and courageous priests, who lurked about in

peril of their lives to minister to their scattered flocks.

A message would be sent by one of the two friends to the other at the dead of night, to give notice that the Holy Sacrifice was about to be offered in one of these secret chambers; and each in turn obeyed the welcome summons of the other.

Mdlle. de Lamourous used every effort in her power to sustain the faith of her poor neighbours during that dreadful time. She gathered the women and girls together in the wood near her house on Sundays and holidays for instruction; and whenever she had a priest staying with her, admitted as many of the neighbouring peasants as her little oratory would hold to hear Mass, or to join with her in reciting the rosary. She catechised the children, visited the sick and dying, and laboured to excite in their souls such contrition and earnest desire for the Sacraments as might supply the want of their actual reception. She taught them how to make a good spiritual communion, and often had the happiness of seeing these poor people die with sentiments of most edifying piety. So perfect was the confidence felt by the peasants in her ministrations, that after the Concordat and the return of the curés to their flocks, it was sometimes hard to persuade them to send for the priest instead of "Mamizelle."

A constitutional priest had been sent to Le Pian; but Thérèse never heard his Mass. The unhappy man, who had erred rather from weakness than from malice, never resented her conduct, and asked as a favour to be allowed to come and see her. In her presence he always seemed keenly sensible of his miserable position. Mdlle. de Lamourous pitied him sincerely; and in the belief that he had been driven into schism by the pressure of want, intimated to him through a third person, that if he would re-

trace his steps, his necessities should be supplied by one who did not wish to be named.

It does not appear whether her efforts for his restoration were successful or not.

Good and faithful, however, as were the greater number of the inhabitants of Le Pian, the Revolution had its adherents even among them. The church was desecrated, and a crucifix long held in veneration was dismembered, and its pieces scattered through the adjoining vineyards. Therèse knelt every evening on the spot where the crucifix had stood, to say her rosary in atonement for the sacrilege. One evening, as she was returning home in the dark, a little girl, who was holding her hand, cried out that she saw something lying on the road, and was afraid to go near it. Mdle. de Lamourous soothed the child; and approaching the object of her terror, discovered that it was the right arm of the dismembered crucifix. With the quick instinct of faith, she knelt down and reverently kissed the precious fragment, exclaiming: "All is not lost, since the right arm of the Lord is still with us."

Shortly afterwards the young men of the parish took pains to collect the remainder of the scattered pieces, and replaced them as well as they could without tools or cement; and thus rudely restored, the crucifix remained for thirty years in that precarious condition.

Father Pannetier, a Carmelite monk, whom Therèse visited in his prison at the peril of her life, left her this injunction with his parting blessing: "Remember, God will have you to serve Him not as a woman but as a man." And well did she fulfil the martyr's last direction.

While the revolutionary frenzy was at its height, she went continually to Bordeaux, to minister to its victims. She haunted the prisons, made her way to

the foot of the scaffold, mingled with the fierce rabble in the purlieus of the tribunals, and thus obtained a sight of the proscription lists, and was enabled to give timely warning to many whose names were marked down for death. Sometimes, when her eye fell unexpectedly on some loved or honoured name, or when the brutal jests of the mob tortured her ears, the heroic woman could not restrain some indication of emotion. "Why, citoyenne, what ails thee?" some Jacobin would say; "thou art not sorry for these wretched aristocrats?" With ready presence of mind, she would reply, "What would you have? a woman's a woman; we can't be as courageous as you men."

Towards the close of the Reign of Terror, she was herself brought before the Revolutionary Tribunal; but the fiercest of the danger had now passed away with the fall of the infamous Lacombe, the Robespierre of Bordeaux. When Therèse stood before the surviving members of the Committee of Public Safety, they recognised her with astonishment as the person to whom they had so often shown the proscription lists. "Oh," exclaimed they, "if we had but known her!" But the tide had now turned, and she was soon set at liberty.

She was in far greater danger at an earlier period of the Revolution, when she was saved, humanly speaking, by her remarkable coolness and ready wit. Having been arrested as an aristocrat and favourer of priests and other enemies of the Republic, Mdlle. de Lamourous was brought before the president of the fatal tribunal which examined but to condemn.

Therèse had long prepared herself for death by the guillotine as her inevitable and most welcome fate. She had even cut off her hair in preparation for the stroke, and was accustomed to go and pray at the foot of the scaffold, where so much innocent

blood had been shed, with a holy ambition to offer hers on the same altar; but neither was this the sacrifice required of her.

She entered the court on this occasion, believing that now her hour was come. "Citoyenne," said the president roughly, "you are accused of harbouring priests, and of being of noble birth. What have you to say in your defence?" Mdlle. de Lamourous looked at him steadily and replied, "May I ask you one question, citizen?" He nodded assent. "Would it be indiscreet," said she, "to inquire what gave you that mark on your cheek?" "That's a strange question," replied the president; "I was born with it, I believe. My mother brought me into the world with it." "Well, citizen," said Therèse, "and I was born with my nobility. My mother brought me into the world with that mark upon me; it was her doing, not mine." The bystanders burst out laughing; and the president dismissed her, saying good-humouredly, "Get along with you; you are not one of the bad sort."

This ready presence of mind never forsook her. Once, when she had occasion to go to Bordeaux, she was much perplexed what to do with her father. She was afraid of leaving him behind, incapable as he was of taking care of himself; and little less afraid of taking him with her, lest he should be moved to some outburst of impatience. Still this seemed the less danger of the two, so they set out together. About half way between Le Pian and Bordeaux, the old nobleman insisted on getting out, and walking the rest of the way. In terror lest he should insult some of the Republicans on the road, and so get himself into trouble, Therèse besought him to remain in the carriage with her; but to no purpose. At this moment she saw two men going towards Bordeaux, whose dress and countenances clearly pointed

them out as belonging to the extreme revolutionary party. In a moment, after a short ejaculatory prayer, she had made up her mind what to do. She walked straight up to the two men, and said, in her usual frank and courteous manner, "My friends, will you do me a great kindness? I am obliged to go to Bordeaux on pressing business. That good old man you see there is determined to walk all the way, and I am uneasy at leaving him alone. If you would promise me to keep him in sight, and to take care that no harm comes to him, I should be at rest. Nobody would meddle with him while under your protection." The promise was given; and under this strange escort the old aristocrat, little suspecting under what guardianship he had been placed, found his way in safety to Bordeaux.

M. de Lamourous died at Le Pian, at a very advanced age, tended to the last by his devoted daughter, who saw him quietly laid to rest in the village churchyard.

The heroism of Thérèse grew out of the simplicity of her faith, and her vivid perception of the invisible world. One anecdote may serve as a key to her whole history. As she was returning on foot from one of her visits to Bordeaux, she was benighted, and overtaken by a fearful storm on a wild moor, which was known to be infested by wolves. She expected every moment to hear their horrible cry; but she thought of her guardian angel, and held out her hand to him as she walked. She remembered, too, to have heard that the sound of the human voice keeps wild-beasts at bay; so she sang a hymn, and walked boldly along. "With my little parcel in my hand," said she, when telling the tale, "hand in hand with my guardian angel, and singing a hymn at the top of my voice, I made my way safely across the moor."

Brave and gentle-hearted Therèse de Lamourous! It was thus, hand in hand with her angel guardian, and keeping step to the melody of her own pure and holy thoughts, that she crossed the bleak wild moorland of this world, keeping at bay men more fierce than wolves, and reclaiming women, harder to tame than they, by the might of her gentleness and the winning gladness of her piety. During these dreary times she was often debarred for months together from all access to the Sacraments, and was once for sixteen months without confession or communion. With touching and child-like simplicity, she invented a way of making a spiritual confession. She used to kneel down every Saturday before a little image of St. Vincent de Paul, whom she chose as her spiritual director, and, as she expressed it, go to confession to him; accusing herself of all her faults with the most scrupulous exactness. "I stood in great awe," she used to say, "of the good Saint."

On Sunday morning, after a careful preparation, she made a spiritual communion, followed by as fervent a thanksgiving as if she had actually received the Body and Blood of the Lord. In the same way, she would prepare the altar in her little oratory for Mass, placing upon it book, candles, and all things necessary for the offering of the Holy Sacrifice; and then would kneel down to hear it in spirit with the most intense devotion. O, how shall this fervent soul rise up in judgment with us, who, in the abundance of our privileges, and the fullness of the security in which we may enjoy them, too often provoke the Lord to withdraw Himself from us by our careless confessions and cold communions!

But at length the black clouds began to clear away; the Catholic worship was reëstablished in France; and Le Pian, which had at first been annexed as a hamlet to a neighbouring parish, in consequence

of the unwearied exertions of Mdlle. de Lamourous, received a pastor of its own in the person of one of her nephews, who had been labouring among that simple people for some years before his ordination with a zeal and love like her own.

CHAPTER III.

FOUNDATION AND EARLY DIFFICULTIES OF THE HOUSE OF MERCY.

AND now the land had rest, and we might have thought that Therèse de Lamourous would have found rest also; but a voice had haunted her all through the glad bright days of her girlhood, and through the fearful time in which her maturer life had been passed,—a voice which seemed to call upon her to do or to sacrifice something for God, she knew not what or how.

And now that she was alone and at peace in the little cottage, which had become so inexpressibly dear to her from the trials through which she had passed within its walls, the call seemed to sound nearer and more imperative. "My God," would she cry out, in anguish of soul, "what wilt Thou have me to do? Am I to embark on an unknown sea, without rudder or compass? So be it, O Lord! I am ready; only make known to me Thine adorable will." And then, as her heart foreboded that she would have to leave her beloved home, she would kiss the walls of her little cottage. So intense was her love of solitude, that on Sundays she would close the shutters and doors, that she might not be disturbed by visitors, and in silence and darkness spend hours in lonely contemplation.

But now her anxious question was to be answered, not by supernatural voice or vision, but by the more ordinary and surer way in which our Lord is wont to make known His will to those who seek Him in simplicity,—the course of His Providence, interpreted by obedience.

Therèse de Lamourous had offered to God the sacrifice of her whole being, to serve Him in a Carmelite cell or to die for Him on a scaffold. He asked for something harder to her nature than either, and in its searching severity more conducive to its perfection. One of the characteristic features of her character was a shrinking modesty, which caused her to recoil from any thing like impurity with almost physical loathing. She, who could brave the terrors of the wolf or the Jacobin on her visits of mercy to Bordeaux, would go miles out of her way rather than risk meeting any of those sinful and unhappy women, to whom she was destined at last to become so tender a mother. Perhaps, like many another gentle and pure-minded woman, she cherished this feeling as something akin to virtue; but she loved her Lord too well to be suffered thus to keep aloof from any soul for which He died.

In a manuscript record of the House of Mercy Mdle. de Lamourous gives the following simple account of its origin:

“In July 1800, a young person, ashamed of her vicious life, went to Mdle. de Pichau-Longueville with an earnest entreaty that she would get her taught to work, and thus enable her to abandon her evil courses. This charitable lady placed her with a dressmaker, and paid for her apprenticeship. Several of the girl’s unhappy associates heard what she had done, and had recourse to the same benevolent benefactress, who received them all as children of the Good Shepherd, and as such committed by

Him to her charge. As their number increased, it became difficult to watch over them, or separately to provide for their necessities; and a house was hired, of which they took possession on the 12th of May 1801; at which time Mdlle. Therèse de Lamourous, who had been for some months associated with Mdlle. de Pichau in her care of these poor women, finally determined to remain with them, in order to direct and train them in the observance of a rule of life. They joyfully complied with what was required of them, and submitted to all the privations which the extreme poverty of the establishment involved; for it never had any other means of subsistence than the alms of the faithful and the labour of its inmates."

The extreme and characteristic modesty of this statement calls for a more detailed explanation of the share which Mdlle. de Lamourous took, first in Mdlle. de Pichau's scheme, and afterwards in the management of the establishment.

In July 1800, Mdlle. de Pichau received about fifteen penitents, and placed them in a house selected for the purpose. Some were truly penitent; others came only for temporary relief. To manage and direct this intractable and wayward assembly soon became too heavy a charge for Mdlle. de Pichau's feeble health and advanced age; for she was nearly eighty. In her distress her thoughts turned to her friend Therèse de Lamourous, as one endowed with all the gifts of nature and of grace needful for such an undertaking. Having first obtained the sanction of her director, Mdlle. de Pichau proposed the work to Therèse. She heard the suggestion with amazement almost approaching to indignation, so strong was her repugnance to the task proposed to her; but after a few moments' reflection, the thought flashed across her mind that perhaps this was the very sacrifice required of her. Mastering her repugnance by

a strong effort, she consented to accompany Mdlle. de Pichau on her next visit to her adopted children. No sooner was Therèse among them than her feelings of aversion seemed to vanish at once, and an intense joy took possession of her soul,—the joy of a heart which has found its work for God ; and the poor girls, who, with some few exceptions, had shown themselves to be passionate, intractable, and capricious, seemed unaccountably fascinated by her, and were heard to say to each other, “That lady could do what she pleased with us.”

As soon as Mdlle. de Lamourous had left the house, her feelings of repugnance returned, and she almost resolved never to pay the penitents another visit ; but grace was too strong for her. Time after time she visited the house whither she had resolved never to return ; and was always received with the same delight by the poor girls, whose eyes would brighten when her step was heard upon the stairs.

Meanwhile her own relations vehemently opposed a plan of life which they accounted absurd and visionary, and urged her to remain among them in the country. There was one exception, however, in the person of a layman of great piety, whose opinion had much weight with Therèse. When she laid her doubts before him, he said quietly, “Do as you propose, my dear sister ; it will be for the glory of God.” A remarkable dream which she had about the same time, confirmed her in the resolution which she was now gradually forming. She seemed to stand before the throne of God, and to see gathered before it a multitude of those poor penitents whom she had been asked to direct. They were waiting for their terrible sentence, and cast a lingering look of despair upon her, which seemed to say, “If you had but come to us, we should have been saved.”

Therèse hesitated no longer. Though ill at the

time of fever, she set off that very day for Bordeaux; went to Mdlle. de Pichau's house; and proposed to her and to M. de Chamizade, her own director, to accompany her to the house of the penitents. When they were preparing to leave it, she lighted them to the door, and then, wishing them good-night, said quietly, "I remain here." And, with the exception of a few occasional visits to Le Pian for the settlement of her affairs, and a journey to Paris on the business of the House of Mercy, she never left it more.

The work which Mdlle. de Lamourous was appointed to carry out, and to bring to such perfection, began gradually to unfold itself, not by means of formal rules and a stiff wooden kind of system, bearing alike on persons of different characters, but by a daily seconding of the workings of Providence, and an hourly watchfulness that took advantage of every circumstance that could promote the spiritual welfare of these poor souls. None were refused admission; their motives were not investigated; a simple request to be received was considered sufficient. No questions were addressed to the applicants. Many of those who had sought for admission into the House of Mercy from merely human considerations, were, by God's grace, so influenced by the good examples and the religious instruction they received there, that their hearts were touched and their conversion effected. A person of less courage and of less good sense than Mdlle. de Lamourous could hardly have struggled through the difficulties that beset the first beginnings of this institution. A number of poor girls withdrawn from the streets, brought by a sudden impulse to enter the asylum, which at that time was only a small house in a very unfavourable locality, were of course exposed to temptations which no precautions could ward off; and the devil, always on the watch to stifle the salutary motions of grace,

left no efforts untried to draw them again into his chains. Sad instances of relapse into sin accordingly occurred, and did not fail to be commented upon, and to give rise to a feeling of distrust unfavourable to the work in question. Prudent people were not wanting to stigmatise it as the wild attempt of a weak and enthusiastic imagination to effect the reform of degraded creatures who, when driven to despair by poverty, had abandoned their vices for a time, with the full intention of returning to them on the first opportunity. The tide of charity was effectually checked. Many a time was Mdlle. de Lamourous on the point of giving up the whole scheme in despair: human prudence, indeed, seemed to prescribe this course; but the grace of God was with her, and relying on His protection, she struggled against all difficulties, and persevered in the face of every obstacle. Aid came at last from several unlooked-for quarters. She patiently continued to receive all the applicants for admission; and though some went away, the greater number remained and gave evidences of sincere repentance. In these early days of the House of Mercy, Mdlle. de Lamourous had but one companion and assistant, Mdlle. Adelaide Jeanne Corde, who had been formerly one of the religious attached to the Magdalen Asylum. She had been of great use to the penitents previously to their being assembled in one place, under Mdlle. de Lamourous' care. The first house hired for that object had soon proved too small for the daily increasing number of girls who sought to be admitted. Another was procured, which, from its more retired situation, was well adapted for the purpose.

M. Boyer, at that time vicar-general of the diocese, assisted by M. de Chamizade, whom he had named director of the House of Mercy, formed a committee of ladies, under the patronage of St. Vincent

de Paul, who exerted themselves to the utmost in its behalf; and, insufficient as their contributions proved, the very existence of such an association inspired the managers with confidence, and on the 12th of May 1801, on the eve of the Ascension, possession was taken of the new house in the Rue d'Albret. M. de Chamizade assembled the inmates in a poor little oratory hastily arranged for the purpose, blessed the black handkerchiefs and caps which the penitents wore as a badge of their conversion, and read a rule of life which they were at once to observe. He said Mass there the following day; the Blessed Sacrament was reserved, and the Office for the first time sung. From that moment the penitents, who were thirty-five in number, formed a community. It was wonderful to see these poor girls, little accustomed as they were to restraint, and so long given up to the varying impulses of passion, conforming themselves cheerfully to a mode of life which nothing but the all-powerful grace of God could have enabled them to endure.

A few days afterwards, Julie, one of the first penitents who had been received, made a solemn profession of her resolution to forsake sin and lead a life of piety and virtue. It would be difficult to describe the impression caused by this ceremony, the first of the kind which had taken place in the asylum. Julie did not shed many tears; but there was real earnestness in her renewal of her baptismal vows, deep fervour and devotion in her countenance and manner, as she received her Lord in Holy Communion; and with profound humility did she ask to wear the badge of the Blessed Virgin, to whose intercession she ascribed her conversion. Her subsequent life answered to the beginning; she made rapid progress in virtue, and enjoyed the confidence of the directresses to the end of her life. From that

time forward almost every day brought new penitents to the door of the asylum, which was never shut on any one returning sinner. The clergy of Bordeaux, with a generous zeal, subscribed fifty dollars a year towards the asylum, and the ladies who formed the committee continued to support it; but the means thus furnished were totally inadequate to the expense. The calumnies that continued to be circulated on the subject tended to deter a great number of benevolent persons from coöperating in the work. Some few of the penitents evinced a rebellious disposition, and their evil example awakened a spirit of insubordination amongst their companions. Mdlle. de Lamourous at that very moment was laid on a bed of sickness, which kept her several weeks away from the scene of her labours. It needed a strong faith to support her during that dreary time of inaction, and to enable Mdlle. Adelaide to bear alone the responsibility and toil which fell to her share. But this was only the beginning of trouble: matters soon came to a crisis, which is described in the following extract from Mdlle. de Lamourous' journal:

“The scenes which had taken place in the House of Mercy, owing to the bad spirit of a few of the inmates, had been overheard from without, and were severely commented upon. The girls who had proved incorrigible, and whom it was found necessary to dismiss, spread abroad all sorts of false reports; and so great was the effect on the public mind, that the supplies were almost entirely cut off. There seemed no hope of carrying on the asylum. The friends who remained steady to the cause met once more, and agreed that the only way of averting a total downfall was at once to dismiss one half of the penitents, to give some chance of supporting the rest. This resolution, which would have thrown back upon

the world and all its dangers seventeen or eighteen poor souls so recently snatched from the abyss, was all but acted upon. The excellent men engaged in the work again and again calculated every possible resource, and still came to the conclusion that, in order not to give up the whole undertaking, it was absolutely necessary to sacrifice one half of the subjects it was striving to save. O, infinite goodness of God, how wonderful are Thy ways! At the very last moment, the thought suggested itself to those on whom the painful decision rested to delay its final execution for one month longer, and in the mean time to subject the penitents to such restrictions as would limit their daily food to what was barely sufficient for the support of life. M. de Chamizade, the superior of the house, undertook to break this matter to them; expecting, however, that the conditions would appear far too hard, and that the greater number would wish to go away."

But in the mean time Mdlle. de Lamourous had appeared amongst her adopted children, and was received by them with so much affection, that she felt it to be a favourable moment for making known to them the proposed arrangements. "I am later than usual, my dear girls," she said. "I have been engaged in business that concerns you. Alas, I never suffered so much on your account before! Almighty God has been of late so much offended in this house, that His chastisements are evidently about to overtake us. For several weeks past I have trembled for you, and to-day matters came to a crisis. More than half of you, my dear children, have been on the point of being dismissed this very evening; and what would, alas, have been your fate?" When Mdlle. de Lamourous uttered these words, there was a general burst of grief amongst her hearers. The report of the threatened danger soon reached every part of

the house; the penitents came hurrying from every side to the parlour where Mdlle. de Lamourous was standing, and gave vent to their despair by wild gestures, cries, and lamentations. One was heard to say, "And how should I ever have finished my general confession, which was going on so well?" "And what," exclaimed another, "would have been the use of teaching me to hate sin, if I was to be driven back into the midst of it?" "O, as to me," cried a third, "I plainly tell you I should not have left. I suppose you would not have turned me out by force." A fourth kept repeating, "We have offended Almighty God. He is quite tired of us. We have made a bad use of His favours; and at last we shall all be sent away, you may depend upon it. She is too tender-hearted to tell us so, but it is sure to happen. I have long thought it would be so. God will not allow the House of Mercy to continue." The directresses could scarcely get a hearing when they tried to console their weeping charges.

Mdlle. de Lamourous was herself astonished at the grace and faith which were so evidently dwelling in the hearts of many even of the most unsatisfactory of these poor children, and nothing could exceed her anxiety to avert the calamity which was still hanging over them. She addressed them in a few words of earnest exhortation; reminded them that they had not sought the kingdom of God in the first place, and that on that account the blessings of Providence had been withheld from the asylum. She said that their bad conduct had brought the house into evil repute, and that it was only through the great mercy of God that the evil hour was delayed. In the mean time they must humble themselves by fasting and prayer. They would be obliged to put up with all sorts of privations, which were necessitated by the poverty of the house; but

which would be accounted to them as acceptable penances, if they submitted to them with a patient and humble spirit. "Bread and water! bread and water!" was shouted out on all sides; "only do not send us away from the House of Mercy." Mdle. de Lamourous suggested that they should begin a novena to St. Joseph on the next day, to obtain through his intercession pardon for the past, a true spirit of penance, and bread for the support of the community. The answer which the blessed saint made to this will never be forgotten in the House of Mercy. Well did it justify St. Teresa's assertion, grounded on her life-long experience, that his assistance is never implored in vain. From that moment peace was restored; the most unmanageable penitents became docile; and when M. de Chamizade came to inform them of the new regulations that must needs be made, they declared themselves surprised that they were not more severe, and without a murmur submitted to whatever he proposed. The novena to St. Joseph had evidently drawn down on his poor suppliants the spiritual graces they had so fervently implored. Before a temporal blessing was granted, the faith of the founders of the asylum and of the objects of their solicitude was to be yet more deeply tried. All human resources seemed at once to fail. The holidays were keeping away from Bordeaux all their principal benefactors. The members of the committee were ill or absent; the small stock of provisions in the house entirely exhausted; and it was in debt besides. The directresses had expended every franc they could dispose of; the tradespeople refused any longer to supply the house. There had certainly been difficult moments to go through previously to this crisis, but never had the distress been so great and in all appearance so hopeless. The month of trial had come to an end; and on the morn-

ing of the 27th of October 1801, Mdlle. de Lamourous went out, as a last resource, to visit a person from whom she hoped to obtain some temporary assistance. Her errand was fruitless, and as she walked home her heart sank within her. It seemed that all her poor children must inevitably be sent out at once to what she felt would be to most, if not all of them, perdition. Her sufferings were so intense that, determined as she was not to acquaint them with the fatal truth till the last moment, she hurried into her own room, not feeling able to conceal the anguish she was enduring. But some of the penitents had caught sight of her face, and read in its expression that some great calamity was impending. They communicated their fears to the others, and once more a general alarm was spread through the house. They agreed to despatch one of their number, under some pretext or other, to Mdlle. de Lamourous' room; and when the latter opened the door, she immediately read in the countenance of the messenger the fears that her absence had awakened. There was nothing she feared for her poor children so much as depression of spirits, as paving the way for temptations, and serving the devil's ends. Struck with this new fear, grace enabled her to get the better of her anxiety; and returning to the refectory with a cheerful countenance, she and Mdlle. Adelaide took their places at table with calm countenances. They said a few words to each other, which mutually strengthened them: "Come, we have done all we could; let us leave it to God. If it is His will that the house should stand, He, who if He pleases can change stones into bread, will send us food at the eleventh hour. If He does not, why it must be for the best. What object have we in all our efforts but to do His will; so why need we despair? Let us stay on here cheerfully and quietly till hunger

drives us all out." And in that spirit they acted. After dinner they all went to return thanks in the chapel. There Mdle. de Lamourous, casting her eyes on that kneeling flock of returning sinners, some praying with their heads buried in their hands, some bowed down humbly to the ground before their present Lord, some with their eyes fixed on the image of the Mother of Sorrows, felt her heart burning within her with love for these poor children; and from the depths of her soul she poured forth an ardent prayer to their Father in heaven to bless, to save, to rescue from danger and from sin, those to whom she had devoted her life, and to show by some signal mark of His providence that He blessed her undertaking. No sooner had she made this prayer than a heavenly peace took place of the deep despondency that had weighed her down that day; and when, followed by her adopted children, she returned to the recreation room, the cheerfulness of her countenance and manner re-assured both the directresses and the penitents. An animated conversation was started; and nobody could have guessed, who had seen them all so quietly enjoying themselves, in what a critical situation they were placed. Before the recreation was ended, assistance began to pour in from various quarters. In the first place, a heavy cart-load of wood was delivered, and piled up in the place from whence the last log had been taken that morning. The baker called, and offered to supply the house with bread for some weeks to come. Vegetables and wine, and various sums of money, were sent in the course of the day; and in a short time the house was better provided with provisions of all sorts than it had ever been before. The protectors of the asylum soon returned from the country; some, who had been ill, recovered their health; and all devoted themselves with fresh zeal to collecting

subscriptions for its support. The receipts during the month of November were considerable, and the prospects of the institution became brighter.

The instance in question was not the only one in which the asylum found itself in the most complete destitution. Its history presents a continued succession of pressing necessities and of providential interpositions, and the same events reproduced themselves over and over again. It seemed that Almighty God chose to accustom the good foundress, and the penitents who had taken refuge under her wing, to have perpetual recourse to Him, to expect aid from Him alone, and to obtain their daily food by their daily prayer. Sometimes work altogether failed, at other times there were so many orders sent that it was impossible to execute all. In spite of all these vicissitudes, the institution maintained its ground, and the number of the penitents continued to increase. In moments of especial difficulty, when all her resources seemed exhausted, Mdlle. de Lamourous always followed the same plan. Assembling together the directresses of the house, she used to say to them, "My dear children, there must be something displeasing to Almighty God in the way that we are going on. Let us find out what it can be. I will begin by making my own examination of conscience. You will do the same. Then we shall get the monitresses to follow our example, and the penitents likewise. When we shall have discovered the obstacle that stands in the way of God's favours to us, we shall no doubt be again assisted by His mercy." This uncommon method of proceeding was invariably attended with success, and drew down fresh blessings on the asylum. The severest trial that the good foundress had to undergo was the failure of her efforts to reclaim some of its inmates. It would sometimes happen that persons who had earnestly

begged to be admitted, soon grew weary of their new mode of life, and of the efforts made for their conversion. It was with an aching heart that, after exhausting every means of influence and of persuasion, she was obliged to allow the departure of some unhappy creature, whose wilful return to a life of sin caused her the sharpest anguish. This was a trial to which she never could become accustomed. A fruitful source of evil, and which lasted for many years, was the necessity of removing the penitents to the hospital when they became seriously ill. Mdlle. de Lamourous and her co-directresses continued to visit them, and the Sisters of Charity did their best to second their charitable cares; but the liberty of admittance at certain times, which allowed of friends and acquaintances visiting them also, and recalling their thoughts and their hearts to the world and its temptations, had too often a fatal effect on their newly-formed resolutions, and many a poor soul, which had given good hopes at the asylum, was thus drawn again into sin. It was only about twenty years after the institution had been in existence that its foundress was enabled to carry into effect her cherished plan of reserving a part of the house for an infirmary, and thus turning a period of sickness and of suffering into a spiritual blessing instead of a danger and a temptation.

Other trials of a different nature were the continual portion of this holy woman. From morning to night she had to walk in every direction in order to procure work for them, her children; and she would come home at night with bruised feet and legs painfully swollen. Wearied and exhausted, she had still to set them their tasks, and to teach them to work. When the work was finished, it was her business also to take it back; and she often received reproaches and had to hear complaints as to the manner in

which it was executed. She did not shrink from going into the barracks, and petitioning the military tailors for some of the work they had to give away. She was mixed up on these occasions with women of the lowest class, who went there on the same errand; and was exposed to their sneers and insults. She was roughly desired not to come and take honest people's bread out of their mouths, in order to give it to bad women. She always answered with the greatest gentleness, and readily took the last place, acknowledging that the workwomen ought to be considered first, and that she only expected to be thought of if more work remained than they could undertake. If she had been attended to first, she was always ready to give up or share what she had received with the industrious poor. She never complained, but went through all this with a cheerfulness and brightness of spirit which was not the least remarkable feature in her character. It has been mentioned that she had naturally a peculiar repugnance to the sight of the kind of persons to whom she ended by devoting her life, and that the struggle with herself on that subject had been long and trying. So great was the change effected by grace, that to withdraw these poor souls from the paths of sin, she would walk through those parts of the town which they most frequented, in the hope that a look of kindness and sympathy might lead some amongst them to seek the House of Mercy. Her pious zeal was often rewarded, and she was accosted by many a poor girl anxious to abandon her sinful mode of life.

Whilst the good work was in its infancy, Mdle. de Lamourous had to struggle with the censures which many very good people bestowed upon her scheme. Numbers of persons, who seemed to have the interests of religion and of morality as much at heart as herself, did every thing in their power to

dissuade her from the undertaking. She was assured that the idea of founding a house of that description, without any regular means of support, was presumptuous and chimerical; that there was no real or lasting effect to be looked for; that nothing short of a miracle would ever reclaim sinners of that description. But from the moment that Mdlle. de Lamourous had been convinced that it was God's will that she should turn all her energies in that direction, nothing could shake her resolution. She felt that if men would not coöperate with her, God Himself would come to her assistance, and save the souls for which He had died. A person was holding forth to her on the utter impossibility of effecting real conversions in such cases, when she answered, with her usual readiness, "Oh, then we must take care, when we pray to God for the conversion of sinners, to add, 'Except, Lord, that particular description of sinners who never can be converted!'"

CHAPTER IV.

PROVIDENTIAL INTERPOSITIONS.

IN this chapter, for the consolation and encouragement of those who are more disposed to adore than to cavil at the goodness of God in the miraculous manifestations of His divine providence towards His faithful children, in their smallest as well as in their greatest necessities, some instances are given of the supernatural ways in which assistance was afforded to the House of Mercy on various occasions. And first, it will be advisable to transcribe a few notes, relating to such occurrences, which were found in Mdlle. de Lamourous' own writing.

"On the 25th of June 1801, after giving Mdlle.

Adelaide four francs to buy ashes, I had only ten sous left. When I came home again, I found twenty-two francs; and the priest of Marmande gave me soon afterwards twenty-four francs." "On the day that we were all but obliged to shut up the asylum, that is, on the 27th of October 1801, just when we had resigned ourselves altogether to whatever it might please Almighty God to appoint, we received many presents of provisions: the next day but one we had 129 francs given to us, and the following days a great deal more." "On the 26th of September 1802, we were in debt to the amount of 150 francs. I was on the point of setting out for the country, and I had only three farthings to leave with Mdle. Adelaide. I went into the town; and in the evening, that is, in about three or four hours' time, Almighty God caused us to receive, in various small sums, what amounted altogether to 282 francs; so that I was enabled to discharge our obligations, to pay the current expenses, and to leave with Mdle. Adelaide, on the day that I went to Le Pian, 103 francs in advance." "On the 8th of February 1804, eight days before Ash-Wednesday, I was enabled to give an excellent dinner to all my children off a single fillet of pork. This fillet was so small, that the plate that held it contained also nine or ten sausages; and even with that addition it was not very amply filled."

"On the 27th August 1805, I went out for four days with only seven sous in my purse; and on the 5th of September, at seven o'clock in the morning, God sent me a friend who gave me forty francs. I had not at that moment a farthing left for the next day."

The following details regarding the fact alluded to in the last note but one deserve to be mentioned. The fillet of pork which it speaks of, with its ac-

companiment of sausages, had been sent to Mdlle. de Lamourous by a worthy ecclesiastic, the Abbé Saponne, a great friend of the institution, who wished to help her to treat the penitents to a better dinner than usual on one of, what are called abroad, the flesh-meat days. She happened not to have the means of adding any other dishes of the same kind to the one in question; and as it was evidently impossible that forty penitents could dine off this little bit of meat, she thought it better not to have it served up at all. The next morning, however, a sort of internal voice kept suggesting to her that she should order it to be cooked. But, for the same reason as before, she decided against it. Still the same idea would come into her head, and she went into the chapel on purpose to drive it away. But even while attending to her prayers something seemed to whisper to her that she ought to give orders on the subject. Quite angry with herself and her troublesome fancy, she went to the kitchen and desired that the meat should be cooked, adding at the same time, as if to explain the apparent strangeness of the order, "We must help as many of the penitents as we can, and the rest must take their chance another day." As soon as the dinner-bell had rung, the cook began to carve the meat, and Mdlle. de Lamourous, as she was always in the habit of doing, to divide the rations. Two of the penitents carried them from the kitchen to the refectory. Great was the surprise and emotion of the superioress when she discovered that plate after plate was being filled, and that the original bit of meat was still undiminished. She helped forty penitents and the directresses besides, not only once, but twice, from the same dish. The meat did not come to an end till the whole community had amply dined off it. Mdlle. de Lamourous was heard to say that, at the discovery of so manifest

a prodigy, she was seized with a nervous trembling, which she could hardly conceal. From humility or from prudence, she would not allow the subject to be mentioned before the penitents, or discussed amongst the community, and it was accordingly passed over in silence. One day, when some of the inmates of the asylum were in want of clothes, Mdlle. de Lamourous begged Mdlle. Adelaide to make sure that none were remaining in the cupboard where she habitually kept articles of this description. "No," answered she, "there are none left." "Do go and look," Mdlle. de Lamourous replied; "who knows? perhaps something may have escaped your notice." Mdlle. Adelaide did as she was requested, although perfectly persuaded in her own mind that she could not be mistaken. In a few minutes, however, she returned with three dresses in her hand. "Well," observed Mdlle. de Lamourous with a smile, "you see that we are not quite so poor as we fancied. But have the children now all that they require?" "No; a pair of stays is still wanted for one of them." "Well, go once more and search well through the cupboard, —in every corner of it, my dear; I am sure you will find what we want." "O, this time," exclaimed Mdlle. Adelaide, "I am perfectly certain that I did not overlook a single article of any kind." "Well, but, just to please me, go once more and see. I am quite sure you will find just what we want for the poor child." The assistant brought back in a moment the very article required. "I knew you would find it," quietly repeated Mdlle. de Lamourous.

One day, when Mdlle. de Lamourous was ill in bed, one of her assistants came to tell her that there were two girls in the parlour wishing to be admitted. "Is there room?" she asked. "Why, I suppose there is room," answered the assistant; "but we have not a single disengaged bed in the house;

and these applicants have no means of providing themselves with bedding." "O well, never mind; if there is room, we must take them in. And as to beds, Almighty God will see to that."

In the course of the day a stranger quite unexpectedly sent two beds, completely furnished, to the House of Mercy.

Mdlle. de Lamourous' assistants were in constant astonishment at the favours which were showered on the asylum. She never would allow them to look upon these as miracles, but simply called them "instances of God's Providence." One day she had just been told that there was not flour enough in the house for the next day's baking; she was likewise informed that there was a young girl at the door applying for admittance. The superioress turned to the directresses, who happened to be with her, and said: "Come now, my children, what are we to do? I am told, on the one hand, that we have not bread enough for the girls in the house, and, on the other hand, that a new one wants to come in. Must we admit her, or send her away?" She particularly addressed the question to the youngest of her companions, who instantly exclaimed, "O, we must take her in." "But we have no bread for the others!" "Never mind, we must not send her away." And all, with one accord, voted for her admission. "That's right, my children!" exclaimed the superioress. "Let me embrace you all. You are all really my own dear children. Bring her in directly." This was no sooner said than done. "And now," asked Mdlle. de Lamourous, "what name shall we give her? Let us see; by taking her into the house under the present circumstances we make use of the three theological virtues—faith in God's Providence, hope in His assistance, and charity, of course, by withdrawing her from the streets.

Those are the three theological virtues. Well, let her be called 'Theologale' (Theological)." And accordingly the new-comer received that name, lived for several years in the asylum in a very Christian manner, and died in the peace of the Lord. But to return to the day of her admission. When the name of the new-comer had been fixed upon, Mdlle. de Lamourous addressed her companions as follows: "Well, now that we have christened Theologale, what of that other question we were talking about before her arrival? We have not enough flour, you say, for to-morrow's baking: but have you really scraped together all you could? Come, give me that book I see there on the table." She pointed to a little volume which contained an invocation of the Blessed Virgin for every day in the year. The one appointed for that day happened to be "Very powerful help in our present necessities." "Well, my children," she said, "go back to the corn-loft, and collect with the greatest care all the flour you can find; and on your way there mind you keep repeating, 'Very powerful help in our most pressing necessities, pray for us.'" They punctually complied with her orders, and brought away exactly the quantity of flour that was required. Struck with astonishment, they hastened to Mdlle. de Lamourous with the news; she took little notice of the circumstance, and passed it off without further comment.

Nothing could ever induce Therèse de Lamourous to accept aid from any source on which she was not convinced that the blessing of God rested. A large sum of money was once brought to her, at a moment too when the house was in a great emergency. She was requested to sign the receipt; but, on perceiving that the money came from the funds of what is called a charity ball, she declined it at once, and returned the paper unsigned.

The following characteristic anecdote is related of her. One day, after several accounts had been paid, there remained not a single *sou* in the money-bag of the directresses. They went in a body to the good mother's room, to inform her of the fact. "What, not a single penny!" she exclaimed. "No, indeed, good mother, it is quite empty. See, there is not a single penny in the bag." And they held it out to her. She took it into her hands, and reverently kissing it, she said: "Do as I have done, my dear children; and then kneel down and thank Almighty God that you are without a penny in your purse, and that you have more than a hundred poor girls to feed. That is just the state of things that is sure to bring down a blessing upon you." Fervently and sincerely the thanksgiving was uttered; and when they rose from their knees, the good mother, with that gaiety which never forsook her to the end of her life, cried out, "And now, children, join hands and dance for joy that you are penniless." With true French *entrain* to the letter, and in the spirit, this last order was also complied with.

Conversing one day with a friend, to whom she often opened her heart, and who was deeply interested in the House of Mercy, Mdle. de Lamourous said, "I am not quite satisfied that I acted from pure motives in admitting the new penitents whom I received this morning."

"You mean that, at a moment when the house is in such straits, it was tempting Providence to add to your numbers?"

"O no; on the contrary, I am afraid it was from interested motives that it was done."

"What do you mean? What interest can you have had in admitting a destitute girl?"

"Why, you see, it has so often happened that

when we have been in difficulties, and notwithstanding that we have received a new-comer, Providence has sent us more extraordinary assistance, that I am afraid I had that a little in view when I received our new penitents so gladly this morning."

CHAPTER V.

CONVENT OF THE ANNUNCIATION. CONTINUED
DIFFICULTIES. JOURNEY OF THE GOOD MOTHER TO PARIS. HER MODE OF DEALING WITH THE PENITENTS.

IN the year 1807, Mdlle. de Lamourous found means to purchase from the government the ancient convent of the Annunciation, the number of her penitents having already overflowed the limits of two other houses, into which they had been successively removed. The purchase left her burdened with a heavy debt; but she trusted to the same loving Providence which had carried her on hitherto to enable her to discharge it.

On the eve of Palm Sunday the penitents took possession of their new dwelling. Mdlle. Adelaide, the first helper of Mdlle. de Lamourous, and Mdlle. de Pichau, the original foundress of the asylum, entered into their rest nearly at the same time; their memory still remaining in veneration among those for whose salvation they had laboured.

The House of Mercy had hitherto received nothing but casual aid; but soon after the purchase of the convent of the Annunciation, Providence raised up a friend in the person of one of Napoleon's most distinguished generals, the Duke de Bassano, who happened to visit Bordeaux in the suite of his

master, and was deeply interested in the work of Mdlle. de Lamourous. By his intervention she obtained from the Emperor the liquidation of the debt incurred by the purchase of the convent, and a further grant for necessary repairs.

An instance of Mdlle. de Lamourous' kindness and generosity of heart is related in connection with the early days of her residence in the old convent of the Annunciation. On account of the repairs which were going on within its enclosure, the door of the garden was almost always left open; and the directress who was appointed to watch that part of the premises observed that two ladies, one of whom was very old, passed every day by the House of Mercy on their way to Mass at the neighbouring church, that they invariably lingered by the door, and cast a wistful look upon the building and the garden. She overheard them sometimes ejaculating, with deep sighs, "Poor dear house! Poor old house!" The appearance and the exclamation of these good ladies puzzled the directress, and she could not help telling Mdlle. de Lamourous what so much excited her curiosity. "We must find out what it means," answered she. "If these ladies stop again before the door, do you speak to them, and ask whether they would not like to walk into the house and to pay me a visit." It was not long before an opportunity presented itself, and the strangers gladly accepted the courteous invitation. Mdlle. de Lamourous received them with her usual frankness and cordiality, and asked them the reason of the peculiar but melancholy interest they seemed to take in her house. The younger of the visitors answered, in a voice which betrayed strong emotion, "You will not be surprised, madam, at the interest we feel in this house, when you hear that we ourselves inhabited it in bygone days; and that we cannot think without emotion of

the happiness we enjoyed within its hallowed walls. We were nuns of the Annunciation before the Revolution drove us from our convent. My sister Victoire was forty years a religious in this house. I am Sister Therèse, and had been professed a comparatively short time. We both entered in our youth, fully bent upon serving God here all our lives, and dying within this peaceful enclosure; but the Revolution came and dispersed our beloved community, and drove us back into the world, which has no interest or charms for us. The sight of this dear old house fills us with sorrow; and yet we can hardly resist the temptation of lingering on its threshold, and casting a melancholy glance on what was once to us the garden of paradise." "O, my dear ladies," exclaimed Mdlle. de Lamourous, "you have a right to far more than a passing glance. This house is, in fact, your own; and you must consider it as such. I shall henceforward consider myself as your tenant, and permitted by you to carry on here the work of mercy I am engaged in. I grieve from the bottom of my heart at the cruel wrong that has been done you. As far as lies in my power, I wish to atone for it. If I had not bought it, you would, to be sure, have had the additional trial of seeing it desecrated to unworthy, or at least worldly purposes. Now, at least, God is worshiped here, and His holy will respected. I entreat you, dear ladies, to make free with every thing that belongs to me, as if it were indeed, as in truth it ought to be, your own. Come and sit in this room; bring your work and your books with you; say your prayers and your office in our little chapel; walk in the garden whenever and as much as you please; gather the fruits, the vegetables, the flowers: every thing is at your disposal. Make yourselves, I entreat you, perfectly at home here; and say, as you come in, 'This is my house,

my oratory, my garden.'” The two religious listened to the good superioress in a sort of speechless ecstasy; they could not restrain their tears, and thanked God, with upraised hands, that He had given Mdlle. de Lamourous a heart so full of tenderness, and so quick of comprehension of what they should have desired beyond every other earthly consolation. She took the keys of the house and put them into their hands, and as with smiles and tears they declined to keep them, she said: “Well, I will receive them from you, my dear friends; and with my whole heart I repeat what I have said. Come as soon, and as often as you like. Spend all your time here, make use of every thing we possess, and help us with your prayers; that is all I ask.”

The offers so cordially made were joyfully accepted, and the two nuns of the Annunciation came almost daily to the House of Mercy. Sister Therèse spent almost all her time there; and that she might not burden in any respect so poor a community, she used to bring her meals with her. Her days were spent in prayer, in needlework, and in conversing with the directresses and the penitents. She almost felt as if she had been restored to her convent. The penitents were very fond of her; she had such a good tender-hearted soul. On Sunday they used to flock round in the garden, and listen with never-flagging interest to her stories of the olden time, and the descriptions she delighted to give of the ancient splendours of the Annunciation. “There was the refectory,” she would say; “then the chapter-room, up above the superioress’s room; and in that corner my own little cell.” The ruined church, which the community could not afford to restore, was the only spot she looked upon with sadness. Sister Victoire soon ended her days in the House of Mercy, surrounded by the tender cares of its inmates and of

the good Sister Therèse. The latter lived for many years in the enjoyment of Mdlle. de Lamourous' friendship, beloved by all her community, edifying them by her virtues and pious life, and by a most holy death.

For some years the penitents as well as the directresses gave the superioress no name but the one she bore in the world; she was called at the House of Mercy as well as elsewhere simply Mdlle. de Lamourous. But, after they had lived for some time under her roof, and daily experienced her maternal love, they could no longer be satisfied to address her, or to speak of her, in so formal a manner. With one accord they begged to be allowed to give her the name of "Good Mother." She could not refuse the permission; and so became in name as well as fact the good mother of the House of Mercy.

The difficulties of Mdlle. de Lamourous were by no means removed by the imperial grant, which afforded no permanent provision for the asylum. She writes in August 1809: "Our establishment contains at this moment seventy penitents. It is governed by a superioress, assisted by five directresses. It has never had any means of support but the labour of the penitents and the alms of a few friends of public morality. The proceeds of that labour would be exceedingly scanty and precarious, were it not for the making of cigars, which employment they got from the royal manufactory of tobacco. Several of the children of the House of Mercy, sincerely converted and reformed, and having acquired the habit of industry, have been placed as servants in respectable families, and have returned to their parents; some have married: about forty of them have died in the house, full of faith and hope, thanking God for the blessings they had found there. A greater number still remain within its walls, hoping never to leave its shelter."

The year 1813 was again a critical time for the asylum; for not only had the alms from without been almost entirely withdrawn, but the government had ceased to furnish that employment which alone had been the means of supporting sixty penitents. They were reduced to such straits as to live on nothing but the bread which the baker supplied on credit to the account of the superioress; a state of things which in justice she could not long allow to continue. To her earnest applications for the renewal of the government employment, it was objected that the authorities were bound to furnish it to a number of distressed persons in Bordeaux, who thus gained their livelihood. She replied, that if her penitents had been scattered about the town, they would have been amongst the very people for whom that work was destined; and that the fact of their being assembled together in one house, and leading an edifying life, ought not to be a reason for excluding them from a share in its advantages, seeing that they had no other means of support. These claims were not admitted. In this emergency, she was advised to undertake a journey to Paris, both for the purpose of carrying her appeal before the general administration of internal affairs, which, it was supposed, would pronounce more dispassionately on the question than the local authorities, and also to interest some of the benevolent persons of the capital in a work which was at present but little known beyond Bordeaux and its neighbourhood. Mdlle. de Lamourous was by this time advanced in years, and harassed by infirmities which ill adapted her for the fatigues of a long journey. Her tender attachment to the community made her also very loth to leave the House of Mercy for an indefinite time, and her heart sank within her at the thought of this separation. But her love for her adopted children got the better of all other feelings,

and she finally determined to follow the advice she had received. Great as was her reliance on Providence, she at the same time felt that she could not reckon on its assistance, if she left any of those means untried that depended on herself. Once persuaded that her journey to Paris was a duty, she waved all difficulties, and took her departure on the 7th of February 1813. Her letters from Paris to her children at Bordeaux let us into the secret of that singular charm by which she captivated and reached all hearts.

We have only room for an extract from her first letter. "I am at last arrived in Paris, my good and very dear children. I first conducted the novice to her abode, and then came on to my lodging, which I share with a good religious. I am very well off in every respect; nowhere could I have been more at liberty. To-morrow (Sunday) I shall rest, and on Monday begin to bestir myself about our business. Pray for me continually, that I may be faithful to the Divine guidance, and do nothing but what God wills. But you, my dear children, how are you all? not only my five members, but my three little girls, and all my dear children? Are they very exact in observing their rule? Are they charitable to one another? Do they look out for opportunities to make those little sacrifices I spoke of, and which they were to unite with mine, jointly to offer them to Him who can alone give them any value? Wherever I am, I see nothing before me but the House of Mercy. Nothing can distract me from it; I am always going backwards and forwards amongst my three classes. I am not quite easy about the conduct of some of my children. Of many of them I think with great comfort; but then I say to myself, as I turn it all over in my mind, 'Perhaps those I feel anxious about are behaving just as well as the others. Perhaps I

may get accounts of every one of them that will fill me with joy.' The night before last we travelled all night, and I had the moon always before my eyes. At the hours of recreation and of bedtime at the House of Mercy, I kept saying to myself, 'My children are perhaps also looking at that beautiful moon. O, if it could convey to them all the wishes of my heart at this moment, their recreation would be sanctified, and in going to rest their thoughts would be holy! As they looked at the moon they would remember my advice, and all those counsels which I would fain convey to them at this moment.' Well, I came at last to the resolution of giving you all a meeting in the moon, and to beg that you would each of you think of me when you happen to raise your eyes to heaven, and say to yourselves, 'I see at this moment what my good mother is also looking at.' I must bring my letter to an end. To tell you that I love you all is quite unnecessary; you know it better than I could express it. It is also useless to say that I sigh after the moment when I shall see you all again. You know and feel it too. Good by; never forget to remember me to my dearly-loved —. I embrace you all with my whole heart.

Your good mother,

M. TH. LAMOUROUS."

After a tedious delay of several months, the good mother attained the end of her journey, and returned to her eagerly-expecting children.

From this period, 1813, to the time of her death, 1836, Mdle. de Lamourous devoted the whole powers of her heart and mind to their service. Her skill was admirable in adapting her mode of treatment to the various characters with which she had to deal. She received some with the overflowing tenderness of a mother; to others she could be reserved and even stern. Her ingenuity in warding off their fits of

passion or waywardness was inexhaustible. A penitent came to her one day, and said abruptly: "I am tired of being here, good mother; and I mean to go away." "You are tired of being here, my child? Indeed I can easily understand it, for I am very much tired of it also." "You, good mother! are you tired of staying here?" "Why that seems to astonish you, my dear. And yet only just consider; you have only yourself to be troubled about, and I have to be troubled about you all. But what of that? We are not put into this world to amuse ourselves, but to do the will of Almighty God. So now just shake hands with me, and let us not hear any more of that nonsense about being tired of doing God's will."

These few words had their effect, and the girl remained. It was harder work in another case. The good mother was ill when they came to inform her that one of the penitents was determined to go away, and that neither reasoning nor persuasion could detain her. "Send her up to me," said she. "So, my child, I hear you mean to go away; can this be true?" "Yes, good mother, I am resolved to go away." "Well, but has any body annoyed you here? It would have been much against my will." "No, nobody has vexed me; but I mean to go away." "Well, I am very sorry to hear it, for you are a good girl; but of course, if you choose to go, you must. But just tell me what is your native place." "Preygnac, good mother." "Preygnac! we are neighbours, then. I was born at Barsac, the next village to yours. Well, I should be sorry indeed that a girl from my own place should go and get into trouble, when I work so hard to save those that are strangers to me." And upon that the good mother began to talk of the beauties, of the merits, of the inhabitants of their two villages; but she still saw on her companion's face the unmoved expression that boded no

change in her intentions. At last she exclaimed, "But if you come from Preygnac, I declare you must know how to make *cruchade*."* "O, of course I do, good mother." "Well, but then, my child, do be so kind as to make some for me; I have very little appetite, and it would help it to see a good dish of *cruchade* before me. These Bordeaux girls have no notion how to make it. They make a deal of fuss, and nothing comes of it. I know your village is famous in that line. I am sure you will not refuse to give me this little gratification." "No indeed, good mother, I can't refuse to satisfy you." The directress was summoned, the orders given, the girl supplied with what was necessary, and conducted to the kitchen. The *cruchade* turned out excellent,—at all events, the good mother declared that she had never eaten any thing so much to her taste; and the proud and happy compounder of the much-praised dish readily agreed to remain, and sometimes to make *cruchade* for the good mother.

Mdlle. de Lamourous never would tolerate deliberate acts of obstinacy and disobedience; and though it wrung her heart to send any girl away, she never hesitated to do so when there was danger that through her means insubordination might be introduced into the house. The punishments she awarded were so well chosen, and often so original, that they seldom failed of their effect. Once, when several of the penitents had been sitting up late to finish some work, it was discovered the next morning that a peach-tree near the window had been entirely stripped of its fruit. Mdlle. de Lamourous was very much annoyed at this, and the more so, that it was always the custom of the House of Mercy to divide whatever fruit the garden produced amongst

* A favourite dish peculiar to that part of the country.

the penitents. She assembled the community, spoke in very severe terms of the fault which had been committed, declared that she would not inquire into the names of the culprits; but, in order to impress upon the whole house a sense of the guilt of those who had so grossly transgressed her orders, she decided that the tree, which had been to some amongst them an occasion of sin, should be watered with boiling water, and withered to the roots. This kind of execution, and the sight of the bare branches of the ruined peach-tree, made such an impression upon the penitents, that it effectually checked the disposition to pilfer. She was once addressing some well-deserved reproof to a girl, who did not seem much impressed with her reproaches. She suddenly stopped short, and looking on her with a droll expression of countenance, she said, "It occurs to me that two good boxes on the ear would do you a great deal of good, my dear." The girl started, for it was not the custom of the superioress to adopt such measures with the penitents. "Yes, indeed," continued Mdlle. de Lamourous, "I really think that if you were to give yourself two good boxes on the ear, one on each side, it would drive away this bad temper, and spite the devil. What do you say to it?" "Why, really, good mother—" "O yes, I am sure it is the very thing you want. Come, go through it with spirit; first on one side, and then on the other." The girl began to perform the obedience, but somewhat gently. "O don't go about it so gingerly," exclaimed the good mother; "a little harder, and all will be well." The girl complied with a good grace: the sulkiness with which she had at first listened to the reproof completely vanished, and she left her in the best possible disposition.

Perhaps the most remarkable of Mdlle. de Lamourous' virtues was her patience; and, as is often

the case with holy persons, it was the very one quality which was least natural to her character; for her vivacity was so great, that it required all the efforts of a strong will, aided by the grace of God, to overcome and reduce it to perfect control. So complete was the victory obtained, that even when interiorly agitated, she was always able to command her voice, manner, and countenance, and never showed the slightest emotion.

CHAPTER VI.

SICKNESS AND DEATH OF MDLLE. DE LAMOUROUS.

THE good mother's bodily sufferings during the latter years of her life were most acute. Frequent and violent rheumatic pains, toothache, and severe pain in the side, harassed her continually. Latterly open wounds appeared in various parts of her body: every movement, every posture, the acts of dressing and undressing, increased her pains. But her patience never gave way for a moment. At the utmost she would join her hands, saying, "O, my dear Lord, how much I suffer!" If others suggested hope of relief or improvement, she would only answer with a smile, "As our good Master chooses."

The privation of not hearing Mass for many years was the greatest of her trials. First she had to give up the joy of going to church, and seeing her adopted children gathered together before the altar of God; for some time afterwards Mass was said, and the Blessed Sacrament received, by the Archbishop's permission, in a small oratory adjoining her bedroom; but at last she was entirely confined to her bed, and

deprived of that greatest of all blessings, her Lord's Sacramental Presence, save when in Holy Communion He came into her heart. But never did a single complaint escape her lips; even the fervent longings of her devoted heart were kept in perfect submission to His adorable will.

On the 4th of September 1836, serious apprehensions began to be entertained that the good mother's life was drawing to a close. She had been very ill for a long time past; but on that day she suddenly became much worse, and it was proposed that the Sacrament of Extreme Unction should be administered to her. Mdlle. de Lamourous heard the suggestion, as might have been expected, with perfect calmness and serenity; received the sacred rite with fervent devotion; and then communed with God in silence, speaking only at intervals, and that in order to express her entire resignation to His most holy will. During the night, she turned to the two directresses who were sitting up with her, and said, "Which of you will have the courage to sing to me the hymn on death?" Both made a strong effort to appear composed, and offered to sing it together. "Do so, my children," said the good mother; and they accordingly struck up a simple hymn which had always been a favourite with her.

After listening to several verses, the good mother composed herself to sleep, and rested a short time. The next day her appearance was much the same as usual; and when those about her remarked on her good looks, she smiled, and said, "Pretty well for the day following Extreme Unction." A few minutes after she said, still with the same cheerfulness, "I did not think myself so near the end." Eleven days elapsed, during which the fears and hopes of the community were constantly hovering between life and death. The good mother received communion

several times with inexpressible peace and consolation. But though she did not seem to get much worse, and her face retained its usual appearance and expression, she was slowly sinking. There were only two subjects that seemed in the least to disturb her mind at that time. She was often heard to ejaculate with deep sighs, "O, I wish I could have died away from here! If I could but be moved to Le Pian! I should have liked to have breathed my last in that quiet abode." The directresses anxiously inquired why she disliked the thought of dying in the House of Mercy, in the midst of her children, surrounded by their affectionate cares and devotion. "Yes, dear children," she answered, "all that is soothing to me; but what a fuss there will be about burying me. I foresee that they will make a great affair of my funeral. O, why did I not go to Le Pian while it was yet time?" "Good mother, don't trouble yourself about that," said the directresses; "you have given yourself, in the book of rules, your own directions on the subject. If God calls you to Himself, we will keep to what you appointed." "They will not let you do so, my children." "But if we say that we were made acquainted with your wishes? We promise you to resist with all our might any suggestions to the contrary." "You will be overruled, my children," repeated the good mother; and the event, as it proved, entirely justified her fears. Her other apprehension was, lest the extreme affection with which she had inspired both the directresses and the penitents, should at the moment of her death excite so much disturbance in the house that order would be interrupted, and discouragement on both sides tend to the breaking up of the system which had worked so well. Some of the penitents had said that they would never remain in the asylum after the good mother's death, that it would break their heart to

live there without her; and if the directresses were to be disheartened at the moment, a sort of moral contagion was to be feared which would have placed many souls in danger. What she said on this subject to her daughters made a strong impression upon them. She probably remembered the promise she had given to her own beloved mother on her death-bed; and she required the same from these children of her adoption, putting before them the terrible consequences which might ensue if they allowed their courage or their composure to give way. Strengthened by her exhortations, they all with one accord pledged themselves to the accomplishment of her wishes, and assured her that they had seen under her roof too many striking instances of God's fatherly protection, to doubt that He would support them when their mother was withdrawn from their sight and admitted into His presence. Mdle. de Lamourous had probably only expressed her fears on the subject in order to place it in a strong light before their eyes, and to give them occasion to make a firm resolution not to give way to their grief in the hour of trial. She herself from that moment set them the example of an entire relinquishment of all doubts and fears, of an absolute confidence in Providence. It seemed that to the very last this was what God required of her. During the last years of her life, she had felt some solicitude about the fate of the asylum after her death, and was anxious to leave a little ready money in the hands of the directresses for the use of the house during the first period of their bereavement. She had managed to put by a certain sum for this purpose; but a short time before her end, all her plans and provisions turned out to be unavailing. Unforeseen necessities occurred, some accustomed resources failed, and the good mother's poor treasure was completely exhausted. She did not take it to heart, but

concluded that it was not God's will that the House of Mercy should depend in any degree upon human prudence, but continue to look day by day to Him alone for its support. By a strong act of faith, she renounced all anxiety for the future, and commended her two sets of children to His fatherly care with humble trust and love.

The good mother had charged the physician to let her know when her end was approaching; and perceiving, on the 13th of September, by his manner as well as by her increasing weakness, that the moment was come, she sent for the fourteen directresses, and made them stand round her bed. She then thus addressed them: "My children, I beg your pardon for all the wrong things you have seen me do. Kneel down all of you, and ask God to forgive me." She added, "Now I will ask God to bless you all. May He bless you, my children! Love one another, as I have loved you all. Be wise, and gentle, and closely united. If God receives my soul, I will recommend you all to His mercy—all of you and each of you. Be of good courage. He will not abandon you. Never set about any thing without consulting the Blessed Virgin. She will be to you a mother. Don't take my death to heart. It is only a short separation; we shall soon meet again." Then, after a short pause, she went on, "Promise me that you will obey her whom I leave as my successor, just as you have always obeyed me." After the promise had been given, she turned to this directress and said, "And you, child, be strong and courageous. I have always told you that it was God's will that you should succeed me. Now that I am about to appear before Him, I say it again to you with the greatest confidence. Love my dear children dearly, as I have always loved them."

She then said to all of them, "Come now, give

me each of you your hand, and embrace me." She sent for the monitresses of the several classes; recommended them to be zealous for their companions' welfare and obedient to the directresses; and then took an affectionate leave of them. A moment afterwards she said, "I cannot see all my poor children, my dear penitents; but you will tell them that I die with no wish so much at heart as their salvation."

The next day, the Festival of the Exaltation of the Holy Cross, she received our Lord in viaticum, and found a marvellous strength in the adorable Sacrament. Perfectly calm and composed, she received some of her relations, warmly thanked the physicians and one of the directresses, who had nursed her through her illness. Though she was sinking rapidly, her mind remained perfectly clear to the last. She now and then said some kind and affectionate words to those about her, kissed and blessed a little nephew and niece who were brought to her bedside, and then gave herself up to prayer, uniting herself to God by fervent acts of love and of contrition, and preparing herself deliberately for the awful moment that was drawing near. At half-past six o'clock that day she raised her eyes to heaven, closed them again, bowed down her head, and died. She was in her eighty-second year.

At that dreaded moment a silence deep as death reigned in the house. The directresses, full of the recollection of their departed mother's commands, mastered their grief with heroic courage, and went with great composure to announce the sad news to the assembled penitents. The consternation was indescribable amongst these poor girls. For a few moments they said nothing; but soon broke forth in cries and tears and heart-rending sobs; yet not one of them proposed to go away, or showed any feeling

but that of the most touching sorrow. The directresses went about their usual duties, looking after the penitents in the house, and advising those who came from without. So remarkable was the peace, the recollection, the profound tranquillity that pervaded the asylum, that it struck them forcibly that this was in all probability a grace vouchsafed to the good mother's first prayer for them on high. It seemed as if this was not the only favour she had obtained that day for her children. There had been no work sent to the House of Mercy for some time past, but that very evening some one called with a large order for needlework, to be executed within forty-eight hours. The directresses hesitated to accept it, fearing that, amidst the deep distress of mind which pervaded the house, it would not be possible to answer for its punctual performance. The point was submitted to the classes. With one accord the penitents declared that they would pledge themselves to accomplish the task. They said that to sleep that night would be out of the question, and that it would be doing them a kindness to allow them to spend the night in working. The directresses gave way to their wishes; and it was a touching thing to see these poor girls mastering their grief, labouring hard at the work, which they said they knew their good mother had obtained for them, and in which it would please her to know they were employed. They never spoke during the long hours of that night, except to repeat fervent prayers. Their exertions were successful; the work was done, and well done, at the appointed time. It produced the sum of 225 francs, which enabled the directresses to provide for the immediate wants of the community. This good beginning gave hope and confidence to both parties, and confirmed their faith in that Blessed Providence which had never failed

to assist the good mother, and to which she had so earnestly commended them upon earth, when herself on the threshold of heaven.

During all the time that the corpse of the good mother remained in the room and in the church where it was successively exposed, there was a continual concourse of persons of all ranks, who came to pray before it, and to get rosaries and crosses applied to what the popular feeling considered to be the relics of a saint. The burial-service was performed with the greatest pomp. The body was carried in procession through the streets, attended by all the secular clergy, deputations from all the religious orders in the town, the municipal authorities, and a detachment of troops. The funeral procession was a sort of triumph. The tears, the prayers, the blessings of the whole population followed it. There was but one voice to proclaim that the good mother had been the refuge of sinners, the consoler of the afflicted, the help of the destitute; every eye was moistened with tears of affection or admiration, every hand raised to bless her remains as they passed along the streets of that city, where, in close imitation of her Lord, she had gone about doing good all the days of her life. She was buried in the vault of the ancient church of the Annunciation, now attached to the House of Mercy,—that great work which she had raised up for the glory of God and the salvation of souls. A simple white marble slab was placed over her tomb, on which the following words were inscribed :

MARIE THERÈSE CHARLOTTE DE LAMOUROUS,
Foundress and First Superioress of the House of Mercy at
Bordeaux.

Born the 1st of November 1754.

Deceased the 14th of September 1836.

A strong belief prevailed among the penitents and friends of Thérèse de Lamourous, and even in the city and neighbourhood of Bordeaux, that she had been favoured with supernatural gifts, and that the Church would one day sanction the instinctive homage which was paid to her there. Be this as it may, her name may well be inscribed beside that of the Sœur Rosalie upon the bright catalogue of those who have turned many to justice, and who shine as stars in the firmament above, though they may never be named upon the altars of the Church below.

THE END.

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